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WILLIAM LANGSHAWE,

THE

COTTON LORD.

BY MRS. STONE,

AUTHORESS OF "THE ART OF NEEDLEWORK."

"Of manufactures, trade, inventions rare,
Steam towers, and looms."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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WILLIAM LANGSHAWE,

THE COTTON LORD.

CHAPTER I.

A COTTON-MAN IN TROUBLE.

"The blood, once fervid, now to cool began,
And time's strong pressure to subdue the man."

CRABBE.

"Women are soft, mild, pitiable, flexible."

SHAKSPEARE.

NOTWITHSTANDING her own individual causes for anxiety, in the abrupt termination of her intercourse with Mr. Walmsley, and his sudden departure for the Continent, and more especially in the unwelcome attentions of Mr. Balshawe, Edith could not be unaware of the unusual disquiet visible in her father's manner

and conduct. It was not, indeed, such as would be quickly noticed by a casual observer, but his affectionate and intelligent daughter had a quick eye, and a ready sympathy for the uneasiness of a father whom she deeply loved. The quivering spirit of the Cotton lord could not conceal its workings, as he sat in quiet by his own fireside. He could — he needed to battle with the world when he met its glances, but in his solitude his feelings were less under control.

In truth, it is wonderful to behold—and not the less wonderful because little known, and therefore a thing little esteemed—how fiercely and successfully men of high commercial fame battle with difficulties as they beset them. The politician, the soldier, the sailor, each has his loud acclaim for coolness and freedom of demeanour in time of danger; but few remark, and nobody condescends to tell, how the mind of a tradesman battles with, and subdues mere fleshly fears when that which he holds dearest on earth, his credit and his name, are in jeopardy, and the terrors of a "stoppage" compass him about. In truth, that is no mean intellect which, on a crowded

exchange, in the face of rivals, of those great ones whom he has met as equals, and those men to whom a glance of recognition has been an acceptable favour, can cover with a face of cheerfulness a bosom of sorrows, and carry high the head when the last planks of the ship are about to part. This Mr. Langshawe had done with some success, but it must be confessed that his appearance was much altered; he looked pale and anxious; there was a restlessness in his eye which was unusual, and a contracting of the brow as he relapsed into frequent fits of abstraction, which convinced his daughter that something was wrong. Rousing himself from these, he would assume a boisterous joviality of manner, by no means usual with him, and would drink wine, and force conversation, as if to conceal what was preying on him. But quickly the fits would return, and he looked perplexed and absent. His stay in town was protracted on each visit to a later and still later hour; and instead of gaily doing the honours at his own five o'clock dinner-table, he would have "a chop at the warehouse," and not return home till towards midnight; and then when

his daughter, as usual, ran into the hall to meet him, he would cut short all conference by peremptorily, though most kindly, dismissing her to her chamber. On the days too when he chanced not to go to Manchester, instead of enjoying himself as formerly in his own pretty domain, he was shut up with clerks and superintendents; or he took forced and hasty journeys, without naming the direction in which he was going, or alluding in the most remote degree to his object in making them; and from these journeys he often returned more moody than when he set out.

All this made Edith seriously uneasy, and she frequently spoke to her mother on the subject, without, however, finding her perplexities relieved. Mrs. Langshawe was not practically conversant with business. She knew generally that the markets were low, and that trade was very bad, but, not as yet fully informed by her husband of the worst, she thought him far removed beyond the possibility of any loss involving permanent inconvenience, and, therefore, she counselled Edith that it was better to take no notice of his dejection and uneasiness.

Edith was too affectionate to waken her mother to apprehensions which *might* never be realized; but she felt that a slight, or merely temporary depression in his affairs would not have caused her father the very serious anxiety which was destroying his comfort and undermining his health.

At length Mr. Langshawe sought a conference with his daughter.

She started with pleasure as she heard his well-known, but of late unaccustomed knock at her door, but her pleasurable anticipations were soon quenched by his countenance and manner. Kind, most kind, he was to her at all times; but his voice and look were now so subdued, so gentle and affectionate, that vague apprehensions of she knew not what overcame her, and heartsick, she pressed her hand to her eyes to repel the gushing tears.

"I have been debating with myself for some days, my child, whether I should speak to you or not, and at last I have come to the deliberate opinion that it is only fair, both towards you and myself, that you should know exactly how I am situated. If the sacrifice of my right hand could have saved you and

your mother from this trouble, Edith, you should have been spared."

Edith now wept outright.

"Nay, Edith, nay; do not act thus. I expect to find you a strong-minded, reasonable woman, not a crying girl. Compose yourself, my dear; and believe me, you cannot have more pain in hearing than I in telling anything that must disquiet you."

He now told her of a speculation he had made some months before. When the markets were somewhat high, and under the anticipation, a very general one, of a progressive advance, if not of a great and sudden rise in the article, he had ventured, for well-nigh the first time, to violate his homely maxim of a safe trade and small profits, and had contracted for a large stock of material, partly, indeed, in the spirit of speculation, but partly in the legitimate expectation of its being valuable as manufacture. Scarcely was it warehoused, however, ere the prices suddenly fell. To sell at a loss was a resolution difficult to come to at all times, but most so with a man with whom this was almost his maiden speculation. To make matters worse, however, there was

no diminution of his stock of yarns and goods, with which his warehouses were jammed from cellar to roof. In the present state of the country, these too had become unavailable, except at a ruinous loss. He had been discounting his bills, too, in the necessary processes of paying his brokers, but that at so ruinous a rate that he could not continue it. His acceptances, which he had of course calculated on meeting by sales, threatened to return on his hands, and his credit was at stake. He must sell, then, even at prices involving utter eventual ruin, to redeem his bills; he must obtain the use of money. This done, he doubted not, even yet, could he but "hold" long enough, to turn his hitherto unlucky speculation to magnificent profit. This money, having sold at whatever price the market offered, and having forestalled all other resources, he saw but one mode of obtaining, and that was through Edith.

"How?" she inquired.

"By her marriage with young Balshawe."

Edith shrank as if a viper had stung her, but her father saw not the movement. He proceeded.

The father of the young man had agreed, in the event of a marriage, to invest a certain and very considerable sum of money in trade for his son. This, under such security as he (Mr. Langshawe) could offer, he doubted not to obtain the use of. He did not wish to urge Edith to a hasty marriage: would she but give her promise, nay, indeed, would she but hold out a hope, he had no doubt but that his old friend would accommodate him.

"And would he not," said Edith, "with such security, accommodate you without this engagement?"

"No. He has already accommodated me to a considerable extent. He has done what he could; and he does not feel justified in advancing this further and more considerable loan without his son's concurrence."

"And his concurrence is not to be obtained without this noble-minded stipulation! I suppose he would make a bill of parcels of me, as he would of a bale of goods:

"'*By Miss Langshawe's hand—so much.*'"

"Do not, Edith, do not sneer at the young man thus. This is a serious sum for one man to risk for another, and it is quite natural

and proper that Mr. Balshawe should look keenly for the probable return, and not, I think, unreasonable that he should endeavour to direct the matter towards the furtherance of his dearest wishes."

"It matters not, father, I cannot. I will work for you, beg for you, starve for you; but I will not marry John Balshawe."

"Be it so, Edith. But with regard to the matter of *starving*, since that is the gentle term you choose to select, remember that you will not starve alone. Be this reverse as it may, more or less severe, your mother must share it with you." Edith started. "I say nothing of myself; for my own imprudence has brought this crisis on, and nothing is left for me but to bow beneath the storm I have raised. Happy and thankful should I be, if by the sacrifice of my own comfort I could retain some for my child and her mother."

"Father, dear father, do not talk thus; you will kill me."

"These ideas may shock you, my child, but they are quite familiar to me. For months past they have been my thoughts by day, and my dreams—if dreams I may call them,

for I have slept little—by night. And many a long night, as awake and weary I have counted the hours, and felt that my health was yielding, and my heart was sinking within me, I have prayed that I might retain energy sufficient to re-establish my wife and daughter in their wonted prosperity, and then, if my own life did give way in the struggle, I cared not."

"Tell me," said Edith, in a low, yet distinct whisper, "tell me what you would have me do."

"I would have you, my love, listen patiently, calmly, if you can, to what I have to say to you; and then decide for yourself. I am not going to *urge* you to anything; nor will I, after this discussion, ever renew the subject, unless at your own seeking."

Edith sat with her elbow on the arm of her chair, shading her eyes with her hand; the other hand she extended to her father, who took it kindly in his own and resumed:

"Some time ago, when I mentioned to you Mr. John Balshawe's wish to pay his addresses to you, you manifested no slight repugnance towards him. I was sorry for the indication

thus given of your feelings, but I really thought it was only an imaginary aversion, that would soon wear off, and I gave him every possible encouragement. Independent of the pecuniary advantages of the match, I was highly pleased with the young man himself, and I greatly wished the union. If I wished it then, when I stood before the world an honourable and wealthy merchant, it can hardly be expected that, in my present precarious situation, I should view its advantages with an indifferent eye. I thought some of your coolness to Mr. Balshawe proceeded from your transient predilection for young Walmsley, and—"

"Do not name him, sir; do not name him!" gasped Edith.

Mr. Langshawe kindly pressed her hand.

"I do it merely, my dear Edith, that you may understand why, as a father, I preferred the one suitor to the other. I know no ill of Mr. Walmsley, and I am sure I do not wish to learn any: but he appears to me far better qualified to spend a fortune than to make one. That he has excellent qualities I do not doubt; but he seems to me to be too listless and dreaming to make a very efficient protector to a young

and inexperienced woman. Young Balshawe, on the contrary, is stirring, active, energetic: he has the habits of a man of business, the talents, and no slight share of the experience of one; and if I committed you to his care I should have the satisfaction—an incalculable one to a father's heart—of feeling that your future prosperity was as fully secured as it is possible in human hands to do it.

"It was my intention never to urge you on this subject, but to leave all to *time*, which I doubted not would work in my favour; and if months had been prolonged to years, I was perfectly contented still to wait. But circumstances have hurried on this explanation.

"I am not going, my dear, to harrow your feelings by any extreme representations of agony or distress. There will be no 'starving' in the case. We shall still have enough to support us in respectability, but I shall lose the high place which for nearly forty years I have toiled and striven unweariedly to attain; and instead of taking my place fearlessly among my fellows on 'Change, I shall slink aside to do what little trafficking I may have, lest I should hear the great ones whisper at me. This I

shall become accustomed to. But I do not know whether I shall ever be inured to seeing you, my child, cast down from the rank to which I have reared you, and giving place to others as inferior in native gifts as they are suddenly superior in fortune. I do not know that I can ever regard with equanimity the blight on your prospects which I have caused, nor can I ever see without bitter self-reproach your mother, in her old age, deprived of those luxuries and comforts to which, when she less required them, she had become habituated. These penances will be my just retribution.

"Now," continued Mr. Langshawe to his silent and exhausted daughter, "I have said all that I meant to say. I have told you the worst, and it is a weight off my heart that you know it. Take leisure to consider: there is yet a little time to spare. Mr. John Balshawe will be here in a day or two: I only beg that you will suffer his visit to elapse before you finally determine. If then you decide against him, I will, my dear child, do as best I may: you shall never be teased on the subject again."

CHAPTER II.

THE HERO IN DANGER.

"Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
And the rank poison of the old will die."

SHAKSPEARE.

MR. WALMSLEY continued the happy and cherished guest of his Italian friends, who had become much attached to him; and thus time passed away in pursuits and in society which might be supposed to be prejudicial to his attachment for Miss Langshawe. But it was not so: this attachment was not passionate, it was not generally even exciting; but it was deep and abiding nevertheless; and so strongly did he hope against hope, so surely did he feel in his heart of hearts that his Edith,—his betrothed Edith,—though compelled to resign *him*, would not marry *another*, that he had never, except in one very short interval of pique and desperation, relinquished the hope

of ultimately obtaining her hand. It was during this transient interval that he had expressed the wish to leave England, which had been so promptly acted upon by his uncle; and though he almost immediately repented his proposal, the shame of being thought inconsistent and fickle hindered him from alluding to the change in his wishes. Restless and miserable enough he was during the interval which intervened between the time of this arrangement and the moment of his departure; but having once sailed, and his destination inevitable, he was more composed and reconciled, and gave himself up to enjoyment of the rich scenes which opened on him.

Even these, however, surpassing as they were, derived half their interest from the memories and hopes with which his own ever-active fancy combined them; and little did Bianca think, as he lay at her feet in the moonlit garden, while her lute chimed with the tinkling of the fountain, and her sweet voice cast its spell around,—little did she think that then—even then—the one treasured thought of his heart was with a cold and prudent beauty of his native land.

Placed at once by Mr. Luttrell on the footing of a dear friend, or relative, Frank found himself established at once as "one of the family" in the household of his Italian friend. This to one of his sensitive temperament was peculiarly gratifying. His position as an idle gentleman there (for his uncle's commission laid but little tax on his time), placed him at once in the position of Bianca's *preux chevalier*, and this was so perfectly natural a consequence of his residence at the Palazzo, that it excited no one's notice. All the household became quickly fond of him. To the domestics he was kind, unrequiring, and generous; to Mr. Luttrell respectful and attentive; to Bianca most engagingly kind. It was the genuine, affectionate regard of a brother for a young and gifted sister. If his heart had not been fortified by a prior engagement, he would yet have hardly dreamt of falling in love with "a child of sixteen." He had reasoned philosophically enough about the premature development of the daughters of Italy, and saw the perfect consistency and accuracy of Shakspeare representing Juliet at fourteen with the matured passions and feelings of twenty: yet,

in every-day practice he forgot all this, and inconsiderately treated a second Juliet—a still more matured impersonation of the "sunny clime of the south"— with the same affectionate familiarity that he would a darling sister from a formal English boarding-school. This mistake had a deep and abiding influence on his subsequent career.

Many and varied excursions they made to "lions" in the neighbourhood, with Mr. Luttrell, and with other friends; but the host had occasion to go to Genoa for a few days, and during this interval the young people were left much to themselves. True, they never went out unattended: Caterina was invariably with them: but had Frank ever thought of "making love," he could not have had a more desirable duenna: that he must do so, inevitably, Caterina thought was a matter of course; and as Walmsley had won golden opinions from her as well as others, she was as well satisfied with the prospect as with her overwhelming appreciation of her loved nursling's merits could well be expected. Then, Caterina was most indefatigably devout. In that neighbourhood you scarce go half a mile without

meeting some little open chapel or oratory, enclosing a holy shrine or relic; into all these Caterina unvaryingly turned to offer her vows. What blissful opportunities for lovers!

Yet Walmsley did not make love, nor think of it: but he was always at Bianca's side, always considerate, attentive, and kind: and the fair Italian was satisfied—nay more, she was happy, for she had no doubt.

When Mr. Luttrell returned, he spoke of a sudden necessity which had arisen for him to visit Naples, in order to put the finishing stroke on some concerns involved in his recent retirement from mercantile life. It was this secession from business on his part, which had led to Frank's visit, as his uncle had throughout his life had mercantile transactions of the utmost importance with Mr. Luttrell. The latter gentleman, thinking that a visit to Naples might be a source of much gratification to the young Englishman, now proposed his scheme. It was to hire a felucca, which should take himself, Bianca, Frank, Caterina, and one or two other members of his household at once to Naples, where having stayed long enough to

transact his business and gratify their curiosity, they might return leisurely by land, *viâ* ROME and FLORENCE, to Genoa. To say Frank was pleased and delighted is far too cold, he was perfectly enraptured, and was ardent in his thanks and self-gratulations. Mr. Luttrell seemed much gratified.

"I thought the project was one that would please you, Frank, and therefore I shall have double pleasure in forwarding it. I am often ashamed of my countrymen, who seem to come here only to display their ignorance and ostentation; but I am proud and pleased when others come of a superior stamp—and many such do come. Intelligent and unassuming travellers, of whatever rank, are sure of a cordial reception in Italy."

"I must endeavour," said Frank, "to justify the good opinion you kindly entertain of me. You are surprised at my eagerness in embracing this proposal. I might, indeed, easily have roved over all Italy; my uncle has liberally given me *carte blanche*, both as to time and means, but I consider it an invaluable advantage to have your counsel and company. I

have often fancied from your conversation that you must be acquainted with every stone and fragment of ancient classical Italy."

"An early classical education, much subsequent reading, and a lifetime's residence in Italy will, I hope, constitute me a tolerable Cicerone. But in our zeal for musty antiquity, we must not forget more modern delights. Bianca will expect you to be her obsequious cavalier on the *Chiaja*, her most devoted humble servant in the *salons*. We must not neglect my little girl."

"Bianca knows well," said Walmsley, in a tone of the utmost kindness, "that no selfish gratification would induce me to neglect her slightest wish."

Bianca's colour rose, and she turned on him a glance which, why or wherefore, he could hardly fathom, struck him with an uncomfortable feeling. It was dissipated or forgotten, however, in the animated conversation of the gay old gentleman, who discussed his plans and projects with the vigour and alacrity of youth.

Nor was any unnecessary time lost in carry-

ing them into execution. Mr. Luttrell, indeed, had important arrangements to make prior to leaving home, and these took him again to Genoa, whither on this occasion Frank accompanied him. But the latter revisited again and again their favourite haunts, rides, and drives, in the neighbourhood of the villa, with Bianca, and really sympathised in the regrets the affectionate girl expressed at leaving them even for a short space, and that on a professedly pleasurable expedition. In no breast is the love of home and country more deeply implanted and more passionately felt than in that of the imaginative and enthusiastic Italian.

When all preparations were completed, they embarked in the felucca which Mr. Luttrell had hired, and in due time, without any accident, arrived at Naples.

CHAPTER III.

DELIBERATION AND FLIRTATION.

"And much he doubted in his prudent mind."

"Duncan Grey cam' here to woo ;
Ha, ha, the wooin' o' 't."

Again Mr. John Balshawe arrived at Mr. Langshawe's on a probationary visit, but it was in a frame of mind which Miss Langshawe, had she been aware of it, would have felt anything but complimentary. In truth, though not absolutely a bad-hearted young man, regard to his own interest was ever his predominant feeling; and it was seldom indeed that he suffered his heart to triumph at the expense of what his head dictated as best. It was a shrewd, cool, calculating mind which made him, despite his follies and extravagances, inestimable in his father's counting-house ; and it was these qualities, exhibited under a pleasing aspect, and entirely on business matters, which

had so strongly prejudiced Mr. Langshawe in his favour. But the same characteristics influenced every feeling and action of his life, private as well as public, domestic as well as commercial. He had been a spoiled boy, a headstrong and uncurbed youth; and now, as a man, he despised the parents whose weak and doting affection had placed no check on his youthful follies. His natural propensities, unchecked in their action by the inculcation of any higher feeling or moral responsibility, had produced their natural result, intense selfishness. And this was fully called into play by his newly-acquired knowledge of Mr. Langshawe's circumstances. His affections had, as he thought, been easily gliding along in the wake of his interest, and then all was well; he now altered his course; affection might follow his interest, but he could never allow her to take the lead.

All Miss Langshawe's beauty, and all her goodness, though very well in their way, would have shone perfectly unheeded on the sight and senses of Mr. John Balshawe, if she had not possessed a very magnificent fortune to give them weight. Now, this first great requisite

seemed as if it might elude his grasp, and his every energy was immediately excited to the one-sufficing feeling of intense caution.

We have seen that the assistance which his more kind-hearted and single-minded father was willing to afford his old friend, was withheld by the son, except on the express condition that Miss Langshawe's hand should be yielded on its advance. And even on this he had a reservation in his own mind, and meant not absolutely to clench the transaction until he had more than a probable remuneration, even in money. Still, she was not a prize to be relinquished hastily, and therefore he determined to keep up all appearances, while he also prudently resolved not to commit himself, but so to order his conduct as to be fully master of his own actions in any event which time might produce; and so to be guided by circumstances.

Thus mentally fortified, he drove to Lime Grove, and was not sorry to find Mr. Henry Wolstenholme and his sister domesticated there, as the presence of other visitors prevented that appearance of particularity which must necessarily have attached to his own had he been

the only guest. Moreover, Miss Harriet Wolstenholme was exceedingly lively, very pretty, and, as everybody knew, a most desperate flirt. The latter propensity he felt was admirably adapted for his present purpose, since without compromising himself, or being supposed to do so by anybody who was acquainted with the lady's predilection for this amusement, he could take advantage of it, to show Edith his independence of her, and his power at any moment to break his chains. While, at the same time, he thought it would not be amiss that the lady should have an intimation of her dependance on his will for all that he supposed *she* as *he* held most valuable—worldly wealth. Of course, when he married her, he should bring her proud notions down a peg,—it might not be amiss to do it at first. Thus reasoned, and thus felt, Mr. John Balshawe; and it was this system of tactics which led to his at once commencing an elaborate flirtation with Miss Harriet Wolstenholme.

On this her brother looked with great vexation; he always disliked her frivolous and flirting ways, and often chided her for them; though the affectionate good-temper with which

she bore his rebukes disarmed him, or the laughing raillery with which she combated his arguments deprived them of any apparent influence on her. They did influence her, nevertheless. She looked on her brother with admiration and respect, and she loved him more dearly still; and many a piquant repartee had been hushed on her very lips because she happened to catch his apprehensive glance fixed on her. But to-night all hints and checks and admonitory glances were lost; she yielded herself entirely to the excitement of the moment, and was as giddy and as gracious as Mr. Balshawe's heart could wish.

Young Wolstenholme was exceedingly angry, and did not attempt to conceal the expression of it, but it was of no avail. His sister, unaccountably, but most evidently, did not care; and if the flirtation were checked, it was not owing to the bashfulness of the lady but to the retreating of the gentleman, whom some grave displeased looks from Mr. Langshawe admonished that he was carrying his experimental conduct somewhat too far. He had the tact to make a skilful and decided retreat.

That night, on retiring, Mr. Wolstenholme

sought his sister's dressing-room, and there remonstrated with her in stronger language than he was wont to use, on the extreme impropriety of her conduct.

"You know how it annoys and vexes me, even with friends who know your good qualities, and take your foolery for just so much as it is worth; but this young man, this purse-proud puppy—to be made his butt—"

"*His* butt—what do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say, sister, and what you will acknowledge, if you will allow yourself to think a moment. However well Mr. Balshawe's appearance and manners may carry it off in company, I believe him to be a man of low habits: and do you think that if you go on in this way, he will not talk over his bottle of 'that kind girl, Harriet Wolstenholme, who makes such a dead set at him?' Oh, it makes me mad to think of it!"

"Well, don't think of it, then."

"Harriet—how can you? It is not to gratify any caprice of my own, but for your own character and credit I speak."

"I believe my own character and credit to be perfectly safe in my own keeping."

"I hope it is so," said Henry very coldly: "but as I do not wish to see either of them *risked*, you will not be surprised if I am absent in the morning. You can tell Mr. and Mrs. Langshawe that I suddenly recollected some business which obliged me to go home. Good night!"

He was at the door, but Miss Wolstenholme could brave it no longer; she laid her hand on his arm; he yielded unresistingly; and she drew him to the sofa, and seated herself by him.

"I can't bear your anger, Henry, so I will tell you my real motive. I really am *not* making 'a dead set' at Mr. Balshawe, for I despise him as much as you do."

"Then why flirt with him so?"

"You must be duller than I take you to be if you have not seen that there is something between Mr. Balshawe and Edith?"

"Exactly; and that made me still more angry with you for throwing yourself as you did before her."

"What if I did it to save her?"

"How?—do speak intelligibly, pray!"

"Henry, you can't for a moment imagine

that Edith likes young Balshawe: but there is something, I can't make out what, Edith won't tell, and she is one that one can't press or teaze; but I have wormed out thus much, that her father wants her to marry him, and that she is altogether unwilling."

"Why not tell her father so, and refuse him?"

"There's the secret; that's what I can't make out; for, on the contrary, I rather fancy she's schooling herself to meet her father's wishes."

"I don't understand it all, Harriet; and if I did, I cannot see why it should cause you to cheapen yourself to young Balshawe."

"Henry, will you acquit me when I say that I do it to save my poor friend, by showing *him* off to her father."

"A mode of proceeding which is sure to injure you, and is most problematical as to its results with regard to her. Besides, I do not see why you should interfere; Mr. Langshawe is very fond of his daughter, and able to take care of her; and as for Edith herself, I have never seen any want of decision in her character."

"A very strong presumption that there is some undue influence now."

"Who should exercise it? My dear Harriet, you are doing wrong, and will be entangled in some dilemma."

"I care not, so that I get Edith out of it."

"Nonsense!"

"I thought you were fond of Edith?"

"No one can know her without being attached to her: I hardly love my own sister better."

"*Hardly!* If you had not been the most phlegmatic animal in creation, *you* would have been at her feet before this; and then, as we say to the children, Mr. Balshawe's 'nose would have been put out.'"

"I never once thought of such a thing: it never crossed my mind. I have always felt towards Edith as if she were my sister, and I would do a brother's part by her."

"And yet won't suffer me to do a sister's!"

"Take your own way," said he at last: "I think you are very wrong, and very foolish; for I don't see how the end you have in view can possibly be attained by such conduct as yours to-night. But take your own way."

So they parted for the night.

Harriet Wolstenholme was not without the power of grave reflection, though it was rarely indeed that she exercised it. This night, however, she did, and the morning found her much more disposed to yield to her brother's judgment. And if it had not been so, the ball was no longer in her own hands; for Mr. Langshawe's countenance the day before had somewhat alarmed his son-in-law elect, who hardly expected any such paternal demonstration under existing circumstances. No one could better take a hint than Mr. John Balshawe; he flirted no more that visit.

Though perfectly convinced not only of the inutility but the folly of her own hasty scheme, Miss Wolstenholme was by no means at ease about Edith, who, however, resisted all her attempts to draw her into confidence. Harriet felt no pique at this; she loved and esteemed her friend far too highly for that; but it confirmed her in her opinion that something was wrong, that some undue influence was used, for hitherto Edith had been as open as the day.

Put to her wit's end, she came to the reso-

lution of writing to Mrs. Frances Halling, and did so immediately on returning to Willow Bank (her father's residence), telling her her apprehensions about Edith, and entreating her to see Miss Langshawe herself. "She thought," she said, "Miss Langshawe wanted a friend, or she would not have presumed to intrude on Mrs. Halling."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEROINE IN DOUBT.

"Do not seek to take your charge upon you,
To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out."

SHAKSPEARE.

"I am wrapp'd in dismal thinkings."—*Ibid.*

MR. LANGSHAWE abided strictly by the promise he had made his daughter; he did not urge or press his wishes on her in any way, direct or indirect; he did not allude to the subject at all. Nay, it almost appeared that he might have urged a like forbearance on his wife, so silent was she on the subject; but this forbearance was the very way to win the heart and soul of Edith. The mother, too, though she spoke not, yet pleaded most eloquently by her looks,—

"She lookit in her face till her heart was like to break."

This could not last long. Edith could not bear it; and one day, one wet and cheerless

day, when Mr. Langshawe had left them looking paler and more depressed than usual, and they sat sadly and uninterrupted in the breakfast room, Mrs. Langshawe neither doing nor feigning to do anything, and Edith energetically busy over her tapestry, and industriously working blue instead of green, and pink instead of yellow, till its heterogeneous appearance even startled her out of her pre-occupation, then raising her head she saw her mother still sitting in the position she had maintained for two hours,—but that was nothing; Edith thought she was weeping. Yes, not profusely, no sobs, not in that way which makes shedding tears an absolute relief, but slowly each burning drop escaped from the eyelash and trickled down the cheek, as if unwillingly wrung from the anguish of the heart. And ever and anon the hand stole up and dried them, quietly, unobtrusively, as if to prevent her daughter's notice of them. And was this indeed the joyous, the hilarious Mrs. Langshawe? so softened, so subdued! she who had seemed during her lifelong years to have had not a thought or a care, to be incapable of thought or care; whose life was

one continued scene of bustling merriment and joyous activity; who set care at defiance, dreamt not of poverty, and laughed at pain; who rose each morning to renewed enjoyment, and lay down each night to luxurious repose—and was this, could this be she?

Edith stood a moment heartstruck, then leant over her, and put her arm round her neck.

"Mother!"

Mrs. Langshawe looked up, drew her daughter's face towards her, and kissed her affectionately, and then again buried her own tear-bedewed countenance in her hands.

Edith seated herself on the sofa, and drawing her mother's head so that it might rest on her own shoulder:

"Now mother," said she, "tell me what all this means: speak to your child."

"I have nothing to tell you, love, nothing."

"Why, then, do I see you in this distress, mother?"

"Because your father's distress increases."

"And why conceal that from me? why not speak to your daughter, your own child, of that?"

"God knows, Edith, I long to open my

heart to you, and have often been on the very point of doing so, but my promise to your father always withheld me."

"What promise?"

"He made me solemnly promise not to attempt to influence you in any way."

Edith was deeply touched at this convincing proof of her father's generosity of purpose.

"Forget your promise just now, my mother, and tell me all, everything that you wish to say to me."

"My earnest wish is soon spoken, Edith."

"Name it."

"That you should marry Mr. John Balshawe!"

Edith started, sick at heart; and it was some moments before she recovered firmness enough to continue the conversation.

"Mother, mother, you know not what you ask. You forget how lately—"

"No, Edith, my dearest, I do not forget your partiality for young Walmsley, but you have seemed so quiet and contented that, indeed, I thought that was subdued; more especially since he has gone abroad without even calling to say farewell."

"Mr. Walmsley could not call here, mother; it was impossible; but do not let us talk of him. Why, mother, why would you have me marry Mr. John Balshawe?"

"To save us from ruin, Edith!"

"Oh, if I could persuade you how much less alarming this idea of ruin is to me than that of a marriage with that man—mother," said she, throwing her arms round Mrs. Langshawe, and speaking with energy, almost with passion, — "Mother, is your wealth really dearer to you than your child?"

"Edith!" said Mrs. Langshawe in amazement.

"You were not always rich, and yet I have heard you say you were always happy. You had once but a humble, miserable cottage, and yet I have heard you say that the day was always too short for you; why should you now be less happy in confined circumstances because you have a daughter, not only willing to bear her share in your poverty, but also able, perhaps, to alleviate it. I am young, strong, and healthy, well-educated, not unqualified to earn some addition to our income, if it be requisite; but it is not, it will not

be requisite; my father told me that in case of the worst, he would still be enabled to retain a small income. Mother, mother, mother, what do we want with jewels, and plate, and carriages; why cannot we be happy together in a cottage?"

"And have you, Edith, you, my own child, judged of your mother thus? do you, indeed, suppose that my happiness depends on these things? How little do you know me."

Edith looked at her mother with surprise, and with a feeling of respect, which she blushed to think she had hardly hitherto accorded to her; there was all the dignity of truth and upright feeling in her bearing. Mrs. Langshawe continued:

"No one has enjoyed wealth more than I have; no one *can* enjoy it more than I do; it is impossible. But I would throw aside horses, carriages, houses, gardens, this night, and never once give them a second thought, if I could have you, Edith, you, my child, and your father, continued to me. Of you I should have no fear; you are young, and youth is pliant, and bends to circumstances: but your father I should lose."

"Oh! mother, do not say so; my father has a strong mind."

"I do not say it hastily, Edith, but sadly and seriously; it is, I feel, the truth. Your father has a strong mind in most respects, but he would not be a man, he would not be human, if his very strength did not carry with it some corresponding weakness. Your father's weak point is his standing in trade. For mere personal bereavement he does not care a pin; but if he were to lose the high position he has acquired, as a successful cotton merchant, whose exertions have raised himself to eminence—Edith, he could not bear it; he would not complain—he is too proud for that; but he would pine and sink gradually, and he would die."

Edith's inmost heart told her that her mother's perception of her father's character was correct; but she was not able to speak.

"My love," resumed Mrs. Langshawe, after a pause, "I have lived with your father above thirty years, and have always been treated by him with confidence, and this has enabled me to note his conduct under variations and temporary reverses, which he of course has had, as well as others; and it is this thirty years' inti-

mate knowledge of his temper and conduct which makes me speak as I do now. On my own account I would never, never have broken through his prohibition with regard to you, but when I see him as he was this morning, and know what is hanging over him, how can I refrain?"

"I am afraid, mamma, I am afraid you think I *ought* to marry Mr. Balshawe."

"I do not go so far as to say that, my love; but certainly I wonder that you should object as you do."

"Now, mother, speak to me truly; suppose these adverse circumstances had never occurred; suppose my father was as wealthy and prosperous as ever he had been, would you still consider Mr. Balshawe a suitable match?"

"If there were anything unsuitable in Mr. John Balshawe himself under any circumstances, I could not, love, urge you to accept him now. You are as dear to me, Edith, as ever a daughter was to her mother, and even for your father, even for his life, I could not, knowingly, sacrifice your happiness. But John Balshawe is a genteel, well-educated young

man; he is agreeable and good-tempered; his father speaks highly of him (and a parent's testimony is of some worth, Edith); he is well established in business, and can give you at once all the expensive luxuries to which you are accustomed. No, my girl, were we as rich as we have been, I might, in a moment of ambition, wish you to marry higher, but I should never seriously oppose the proposals of such a man as John Balshawe."

What could Edith say more? She walked up and down the room with her hand pressed upon her brow in a state of almost agonizing perplexity. At this moment the sound of carriage-wheels was heard on the gravel, and immediately after a thundering rap at the hall-door.

"Who can possibly be coming to us on this miserable morning?" said Mrs. Langshawe.

But Edith did not reply, for she did not hear; nor was she aware of anything till her painful reverie was interrupted by the sight of Mrs. Frances Halling standing before her.

This lady quickly perceived by the agitation on Mrs. Langshawe's countenance, and the more than agitation, the anguish painted

on Edith's, that she had intruded at an unfortunate moment; with the tact of good breeding, therefore, she at once named the object of her call.

"You are surprised to see me this morning, Mrs. Langshawe, but my object was one which made me not think of weather. Do you think I could prevail on Miss Langshawe to return home with me for a day or two? my nephew is away, and I am alone."

"I will return with you with the greatest pleasure; I shall be most happy to do so," said Edith eagerly.

Mrs. Halling, though somewhat surprised at this *empressement*, did not, of course, exhibit that surprise, though Mrs. Langshawe did. She had no objection to offer, however; she was pleased that her child should have the relief of a day or two's absence from her now gloomy home.

In a very short time Edith was prepared to accompany her friend. She affectionately kissed her mother, who returned her embrace still more warmly, but neither of them spoke.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEROINE IN TROUBLE.

"Be strong in faith; bid anxious thoughts lie still;
Seek for the good and cherish it—the ill
Oppose, or bear with a submissive will."

WORDSWORTH.

EDITH had scarcely passed through her father's gates, in Mrs. Halling's carriage, ere the highly-wrought feelings which had hitherto supported her gave way, and she burst into tears. Her sympathising and judicious friend took no sort of notice, except by once gently pressing her hand; she then occupied, or feigned to occupy herself, with a book during the remainder of the drive. On their arrival at the cottage she at once took Edith to the apartment destined for her, and telling her that no one would intrude on her till dinner-time, she left her to herself.

Our readers can hardly need to be informed

that Mrs. Halling's call on, and invitation to Edith, was in consequence of Miss Wolstenholme's appeal to her on her friend's behalf. She was perplexed, indeed, what to do. To endeavour to obtrude on Miss Langshawe's confidence was not to be thought of, even if certain in the result of being beneficial to her, which she had no idea that she could be; and yet it might be that Edith required counsel and comfort, which, with a mother of such very different habits and tone of feeling, she might be deprived of at home. Mrs. Frances Halling abhorred the idea of interference; yet could she not bear to think that one who had won so much on her esteem and regard as Edith had done, should be deprived of any, the slightest comfort which she might have it in her power to bestow. For that Edith wanted somewhat, and that her school-friend thought that Mrs. Halling could supply that somewhat, was evident from her billet. Therefore the lady went to Lime Grove with a vague idea of inviting Edith to her cottage, if appearances seemed to render such invitation desirable. The result we know.

When Mrs. Halling repaired to her young

friend's chamber at dinner-time, she found her quite composed, and perfectly ready to attend her to the dining-room; she spoke but little, and certainly did not seem to relish her dinner much; but the hostess took no notice of either circumstance. But in the evening, when they were seated in the little parlour opening on to the lawn, whose French windows, on which the glowing afternoon sun fell, were clustered round with roses and jessamine, while the fragrance of a little wilderness of domestic flowers floated in on the evening wind, and no sound was heard but the trilling of the thrush on the near chestnut, or the lowing of the cows in the neighbouring meadow, or the hum of a bee as it buzzed past you, seemingly intent on making up on this fine evening for the constrained idleness of a wet day—then Edith, withdrawing her eyes from the netting at which she had been indefatigably toiling, fixed them on Mrs. Halling, and a painful blush mantled in her face as she said,

"I fear you must have thought my conduct this morning very strange."

"I saw, my dear, that you were unhappy; I had no thought for anything else."

"Indeed, Mrs. Frances, I am very, very unhappy,—nor can I see anything but unbroken misery before me."

"My dearest Edith, you speak under the influence of excited feeling, or I should chide you,—your usually correct judgment is laid asleep. Show me a person in the wide world whose career is one of unbroken misery; you cannot name one, and if you cannot, by what perversity do you appoint such a one for yourself?"

"You are right, Mrs. Halling, I doubt not," said Edith, now weeping again; "and I was wrong, I feel; and yet, indeed, I am very unhappy."

"I see it, my dear child, I see that you are, and I lament it, yet I can only counsel you to patience. Suffering is the lot of all; nor may you look to escape."

"Oh, madam, I did not look to escape! I have been taught, and I have seen and *felt* that my hitherto gay and sunny life would not continue,—that change, and anxiety, and sorrow must come. I know, too—" and here that lofty and chastened expression passed over her features which always, in its frequent re-

currence, rendered them to Mrs. Halling's mind so surpassingly beautiful—"I know, too, that it is for my own ultimate and undoubted good that I should undergo trial and tribulation. But, oh! Mrs. Halling, it comes in a bitter, in a loathsome shape."

"So do most people feel my dear, whatever their own peculiar trial may be."

"Loss of fortune I would not mind—no, not at all; pleasure I could resign without a sigh; loss of health I think I could be patient under; but this—"

"In short, my dear Edith, if you were just permitted to choose what ills of life you would take and what reject, you would select very pretty martyr's fare for yourself, and bear your cross to admiration."

"Are you laughing at me, Mrs. Frances?"

"Very far from it, my dear girl, very far from it indeed. Would to heaven my sympathy or counsel could be of advantage to you in any way; if it can, command me freely—if it cannot, I can only counsel you to endeavour to maintain that quiet and patient hope which, sooner or later, will bring its own reward. Whatever be your trials, my

dear, recollect that such, and worse, have been borne by others."

"Can you fancy a worse trial than that I should marry a man I utterly dislike?"

"No, I cannot."

"Yet, Mrs. Frances, mine is much worse: for—for—I will be candid now—I have long loved another!"

Mrs. Halling started from her seat, and rushed rather than walked to the further end of the room; even Edith, agitated and preoccupied as she was, looked at her with the utmost surprise. In a moment or two she turned, but continued to pace up and down the room with a disturbed countenance. At length she reseated herself, and taking Edith's hand, she said in a tone of the deepest sympathy:

"This is a sad destiny, but I hope and trust not inevitably yours. Is there any possible way in which I can assist you?"

"I fear not; I fear this sad destiny *is* inevitably mine."

Mrs. Halling was silent for a few moments; at length she said:—

"My dear Miss Langshawe, it is not my

wont to press advice on others, far less to seek to force myself into their confidence. Yet, I have lived a long life; I have seen and have thought much. If you would confide fully in me—"

"You may guess, Mrs. Halling, from what I have already said, that if it were merely a question of inclination I would confide everything to you. I would trust every thought of my own to you. I *have* revealed to you my most secret thought. You will believe me, then, when I say, that the particulars of this matter involve secrets *not my own*, and which, therefore, I cannot confide to you."

"Let me hope, then, that your mother, that your father—you are their very idol, Edith,—let me hope that they are not kept in ignorance of this."

"They in ignorance! my mother strenuously urges it, and my father earnestly wishes it, though he generously forbears to urge it."

"And do they know your dislike to the marriage?"

"Yes, they do."

"And of your affection for another, Edith?"

"Yes, in some degree: but I do not think they guess its depth and intensity."

"Will you tell them this, love?"

"I cannot."

"Will you permit me to do so on your behalf?"

"Not on any account; and indeed it were unavailing: the gentleman is gone abroad, and we shall probably never meet again."

Poor Edith! she had with great delicacy forborne to hint to Mrs. Halling any of the circumstances which led to this miserable juncture in her affairs; not that in her opinion her father was at all lowered by his misfortunes, but that she knew any intimation of them elsewhere, that could possibly be avoided, would be exceedingly distasteful to him. She little thought how unavailing her care was, and that she might have had the comfort of unbosoming herself to her friend without giving that friend a much fuller view of circumstances than she had shrewdly combined for herself. That Mr. Langshawe was "under a cloud," was no secret on 'Change, (though the density of that cloud was,) and somehow or other, though he had no earthly connexion

in business with the cotton-men, yet the gossip of their especial tabernacle, the Exchange, was always known to Mr. Ashworth, who was a most industrious retailer of news to his aunt. Thus she was at no loss to account for tokens of despondency which she had remarked on Mr. Langshawe's usually well-regulated countenance. Then, she had suddenly missed her great favourite, Frank Walmsley, from Lime Grove, and, *since his absence*, had seen an heretofore stranger, a handsome young man, not only continually there, but always welcomed with the most flattering *prestige* by the host and hostess. Frank Walmsley, too, whose attachment to Miss Langshawe had been detected (or suspected) by the newsmongering nephew, had suddenly and most unaccountably gone abroad.

Combining these various circumstances in her mind, Mrs. Halling had no difficulty in conjecturing that Walmsley was the object of Miss Langshawe's attachment, and that the distasteful marriage that she spoke of was one which pecuniary circumstances rendered desirable.

But Mrs. Halling knew Edith's lofty spirit

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too well to imagine for a moment that she would consent to become the convenient tool of a mere money arrangement. She could only, therefore, conclude that deeper feelings and interests were involved in it than appeared on the surface. But, knowing matters only thus superficially, how could she venture to advise? She felt it to be impossible.

"It is impossible, my dear Miss Langshawe, that I can offer you other than general advice on circumstances with which I am not fully acquainted. I can only earnestly conjure you to do nothing hastily, and to remember the maxim given to us by so high, so sacred an authority,—not to do evil for the chance of good afterwards to accrue. Whether this applies to your own case—whether the circumstances under which you are acting justify you in pledging the most solemn of vows to one man, while the affection, that sanctifies and sweetens those vows, is not yours to bestow—whether your peculiar circumstances justify you in so acting, you alone can judge; I cannot."

Edith turned very pale at the earnest solemnity of Mrs. Halling's manner.

"If I do what I conscientiously believe to be my duty, though I may err in judgment, I shall not be guilty of a crime."

"Certainly not: but though conscience-free, you may yet pay a heavy penalty for your error, in personal suffering. And therefore it is, my dearest Edith, that I implore you to ponder seriously, to deliberate earnestly, to think, and to pray, before you decide."

"Oh, Mrs. Halling, most earnestly, most seriously, by night and by day, for many weeks past, have my thoughts been on this subject: most fervently, mort humbly have I prayed for guidance. But during my uncertainty I have never opened my lips on the subject to a living creature. This morning a few words from my mother decided the conflict, and, for good or for evil, I am resolved."

"You have decided, my dear child?"

"I have."

"And only this morning?"

"Only this morning, a moment before you came to us. That it was, dear Mrs. Halling, which made me so eager instantly to return with you; for though I have resolved to save my father, and though I know I shall be firm

in my resolution, yet I dreaded seeing him at that moment; he would—for he is far more quicksighted than my mother—he would have seen my anguish."

Mrs. Halling did not speak; she could not. Edith had now inadvertently owned that she sacrificed herself "to save her father."

Edith resumed:—

"You will suffer me to remain here quietly with you for a day or two, dear Mrs. Halling, till I have regained a little firmness of mind, and then I will return home. I have revealed to you fully thoughts and feelings which I have never yet revealed to another, and which hereafter it would be wrong to do, since I must learn to look on Mr. Balshawe as my husband. I will not, even with you, recur to these points again: but hereafter, if my task prove too hard, and the world judges harshly of me, you, my dear friend, you, at least, will pity, support, and advise me."

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD MAID'S HISTORY.

"O'er the shadowy past,
Like a tomb-searcher, Memory ran,
Lifting each shroud that Time had cast
O'er buried hopes."

MOORE.

THE next morning Edith was so ill that, after two or three times vainly endeavouring to rise, she was compelled to desist from the attempt, and to send an apology for her non-appearance to her hostess. That kind friend was instantly at her bedside, and found Edith suffering under an attack of fever,—a natural consequence of the anxiety she had undergone, but still so severe in its symptoms that Mrs. Halling was alarmed, and instantly sent off for medical advice. She only waited for the authentic opinion of the surgeon to send also to Lime Grove; but Edith so earnestly, so

strenuously entreated that she would not do this, that on the medical gentleman's saying, that though the symptoms were certainly severe, yet, having been so promptly summoned, he feared not he should quickly subdue them, Mrs. Halling yielded to her guest's wish.

Skilful aid and kind nursing, added to Edith's quiet submission to advice, soon enabled her to throw off the attack; and on the afternoon of the second day she was able to adjourn to her dressing-room for a few hours.

The next day she was still better; but Mrs. Halling did not choose the pillows and cushions to be removed at all, and propped up by these, in the snuggest of little snuggeries, the invalid and her protectress became engaged in a conversation, which was remembered by Edith with the greatest interest ever after.

How it was brought on she never could remember; it seemed a sudden rush of feeling, an impulse, an ungovernable impulse, which led Mrs. Halling to talk of herself to Edith as if she were talking to a sister: perhaps Edith's own peculiar circumstances might arouse long dormant feelings; perhaps she

thought the confidence might strengthen the endurance of her young friend: perhaps—but it is useless to attempt to account for an impulse at any time—an impulse which will often lead to the display, in a moment, of thoughts and feelings which have been jealously hoarded for years, and which no diplomatic ingenuity could arrive at, no "leading" questions suffice even to approach.

"My own course in life, my dear," said she, "has not been in any way a remarkable one. My early hopes were quenched, and my subsequent career has been quiet and calm, retired and solitary,—yet not so solitary but that I have fulfilled the natural claims of humanity. I have rejoiced with the happy; I have wept with the miserable. In passing through life I have noted much of its chequered scenes, its brilliant passages, and its destroying sorrows: and if the former fell not to my lot, so neither have I been crushed by the latter. Something there may be, doubtless is, in constitutional temperament: some are gifted by nature to combat with passion, whilst others are prostrated by it. Of the latter sort was the dear friend of whom I spoke. But, peace be to her

ashes; she has long mouldered in a distant grave.

"Do not mind my weeping, Edith. I scarcely know why tears should now fall from my eyes. Alas! alas! their withered channels have long been adry; but thoughts and memories, long smothered but never extinguished, are rushing through my heart with a vehemence which I thought had been long extinct. I seem living again in the past, and early hopes, and wishes, and expectations, seem again vivid with reality, and annihilate the scathing traces of a lifetime's endurance. Voices, long hushed in death, vibrate near me; bright eyes, long since withered in dust, are sparkling around; well-remembered tones are thrilling through me, dearly loved countenances are beaming on me—the loved, the lost, the mourned—I see them all! Alas! alas!"

Mrs. Halling's frame shook with emotion, as she buried here face in her hands. Edith's eyes were overflowing; but how great was her astonishment! Could this lady, whose frame was vibrating thus to the pulse of some inward emotion, and who was weeping like a child—could this be the calm, composed, sedate Mrs.

Halling, whose highest expression of mirth was a smile, whose strongest demonstration of sorrowful feeling, hitherto, had seemed to be a gentle sigh! "Ah," thought Edith, "how little can we judge of others! This calm, unperturbed, placid being—I always imagined her unvarying sedateness and subdued placidity were very much the consequence of natural equability, if not coldness of temper; little did I suppose that warm passions *could be* so rigidly governed."

"How vivid," resumed Mrs. Halling, "is the remembrance to me of the day when I first met with her — Helen Lorimer — my school friend. All the trivial occurrences of my young days recur with infinite distinctness to my mind. But they are little worth recounting, Edith; nor shall I refer to them further than is requisite in speaking of my friend.

"I well remember the day when—an open-hearted and intelligent, but most credulous and too-confiding a girl—I was transferred from my parents' roof to the tender mercies of a 'Seminary for Young Ladies,' for a year's *finish*. My education, though entirely domes-

tic, had been judiciously arranged and superintended, and though sadly deficient in boarding-school *show*, I soon discovered my real superiority in acquirement over my co-mates of the school-room. I well remember, at that mature period of my life I made a mental vow, that my daughters should never attend a 'finishing-school.' My daughters!—dear, dear—little thought I in those halcyon days, that I was to go through the world a lonely and unloved being—nor parent to watch over, nor husband to love, nor child to cherish me. Well—well—

"If 'fagging' be a *sine quâ non* at a boys' school, quizzing is no less so at a girls', and I, with my credulous nature, and home-habits of simplicity and plain-speaking, formed a fruitful butt for the expanding wits of the young ladies with whom I was associated in the finishing-school. They made an egregious fool of me. I did not then comprehend *white*-lying and quizzing, and consequently their fun and my credulous inexperience combined to place me in some disagreeable situations. I was very indignant and very unhappy; and it was whilst my feelings were thus keenly alive and sensi-

tive that Helen Lorimer made that impression on me, which fifty years have not effaced. I was sitting, proud, and tearful, and solitary, in a corner of the school-room, when the door flew open and a beautiful girl entered, who was in a moment half-smothered by the caresses showered on her. I quickly attracted her notice; and I could see by the titterings, and whispers, and glances, that I and my mistakes were the topics of discourse. Her rosy cheeks dimpled, and suppressed smiles were hovering on her pretty lips; but shortly breaking through the circle, with the words 'For shame! it is too bad!' she advanced to me, took my hand, told me we were to occupy the same room, and she was sure we should be very happy together. In ten minutes we were the best friends possible. She thus obtained at once for me that cessation of hostilities, which my own talents very shortly confirmed. It was soon found that I was too important a personage to offend; for I had not only ability enough to correct French exercises, and to write half a dozen themes besides my own, but I had the inclination to do so too for those whom I liked.

"Helen Lorimer was two or three years

younger than myself, and of a totally different disposition, yet we soon became inseparable. I, though my spirits were boisterously hearty at times, was thoughtful, almost to melancholy, at others; and frequently, of an evening, I would steal from the amusements that were going on around, and ensconcing myself behind the thick window-curtain, would watch the stars come out in the sky, and trace their bright and brilliant course, and give myself up to fancies which, I dare say, had little either of rhyme or reason in them, till the tears rolled down my cheeks, the offspring of feelings which I could neither analyze nor account for. The girls, who knew my hiding-place, would call to me, 'not to be so sulky, but to come and play.' I took no heed of *them;* but it was not in my nature to resist the one who would glide into my retreat, and gently stealing her arm round my neck, would gradually wile me from my gloomy—no, they were not gloomy—but from my pensive thoughts, and relax not in her gentle assiduities until she had fairly beguiled me into the heart of the circle. And then, perhaps, in a short time should I become so irresistibly gay that she would look at me with amaze-

ment, and my school-fellows would elegantly designate me 'an unaccountable animal — cracked.'

"Helen had none of these alternations of temper, or rather, of feeling. Her whole existence seemed a summer-day dream: she was *tolerably* obedient to her governess, *tolerably* conformable to rules: but it was the ineffable good-humour and gaiety beaming from her expressive countenance that befriended her so much. It was impossible to look at her and scold her, and the arch girl knew it. It is beyond the power of art to depict these emanations from the spirit within, yet this admirable likeness," pointing to the painting over the mantel-piece, which had first led to the discourse, "offers no inapt index of her speaking and mobile countenance, of which the exquisite regularity of feature was the least charm.

"Well, my dear, these minute details must be worse than tedious to you, but my memory seems to linger unaccountably over them: I will close them.

"I returned home, to the widowed home of my invalid mother, and in a short period, with her warmest blessing and consent, I en-

gaged myself to Mr. Brocksbourne. This, my dear Edith, is the only great event of my life; but—but I must hurry over it.

"He was anxious, most anxious, that our marriage should take place at once, but this I steadily refused, on my parent's account. His mercantile avocations called him abroad, but my mother's failing health rendered her unequal to bear the fatigue of travelling, or to run the risk of change of climate; and to leave her in declining health and advanced age, without the solace of a child's company, was not to be thought of. My eldest sister and her husband—the parents of my nephew Mr. Ashworth — were about to return from India, and with them my mother would have every comfort that devoted affection could bestow. I was resolute not to marry till their return.

"Two years glided peacefully and rapidly away: my heart was buoyant with new hopes and anticipations, and they were rational and they were reasonable ones, for my revered mother sanctioned and encouraged them. My lover arrived on his last probationary visit; my brother and sister were daily expected,

and very shortly after our happy reunion I was to be united to him who had been for years the very lodestar of my hopes.

"At this period Helen Lorimer, now released from school trammels, came to visit me. It is impossible, Edith, to imagine anything more beautiful, more exquisitely beautiful than she now was: the promise of her girlhood, bright as that was, gave no token of the perfectness of beauty she displayed; and her manners, her bearing were beguiling beyond expression. Even my mother, my careworn and spirit-subdued mother, was perfectly enchanted with her.

"I watched with absolute pleasure the deep impression she made on Mr. Brocksbourne. I had so often laughingly prophesied that she would supplant me in his good graces that I could hardly keep my gravity at his intense open admiration; and jokingly, in the full confidence of a loving, trusting heart, I held up my finger to him as I stood behind her, in a kind of warning way. He laughed, coloured, and turned another way. A thrill of uneasiness passed through me at the moment, but I repelled it instantly, with a feeling of self-contempt for having admitted it.

"When I accompanied Helen to her apartment that night she was eager, blushingly and earnestly eager in her commendations of and inquiries concerning 'my gifted and gentlemanly friend'—so she characterized him. It had always been my intention to tell her at this moment of my immediate marriage: she was not even aware of my engagement; for knowing well the mischievous curiosity of school-girls regarding each other's letters, mine to her had contained no intimation of the circumstance. But now a feeling was over me which almost paralysed me, and I quitted her for the night with my secret untold. And—Edith—the next day—the very next day's observation made me resolve never to tell it.

"This resolution was not made without bitter harrowing agony; but what other course could I take? It was evident that Mr. Brocksbourne had transferred his affections; he was therefore lost to me for ever; for I scorned, in such circumstances, to bind him to an engagement which he was still earnest—let me do him this justice—in all honour to fulfil. No: another had the jewel, the heart—what did I want with the casket?

"I at once, entirely and unequivocally, not only released him from his engagement, but distinctly declared my now disinclination to fulfil mine. I only required, as the last atonement he could make to my withered hopes and slighted affections, that he would never, under any circumstances, communicate to Helen the fact of our previous engagement, and that he would ratify his new one by marriage as speedily as possible.

"They were married, and went abroad; and within a twelvemonth Helen was in her grave. Him I have never heard of since."

Edith had listened with intense interest, as the deep long-drawn sigh she unconsciously breathed as Mrs. Halling concluded, plainly evinced: the old lady continued in an attitude of thought, and it was some time before either spoke.

"And your true affection," ventured Edith at last, impelled by a sickening consciousness —"your first true affection never yielded to a second attachment?"

"My dear, nearly fifty years ago my betrothed husband gave me his miniature, an

exquisite likeness. I placed it then near my heart—it lies there now."

Edith sank back fainting, and Mrs. Halling started up, stung with bitter self-reproach at having, for the first time in her life, forgotten a friend's anxieties in her own.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HEROINE RESOLVED.

"Hope wanes with her."

WORDSWORTH.

EDITH thought much and deeply of the history Mrs. Frances Halling had communicated to her, a history which indeed had little of incident, but which involved a whole world of feeling, a whole life, so Edith thought, of suffering. And yet she began to question this. The simplicity with which Mrs. Halling had detailed the one event of her life, the slight, very slight reference which she had made to her own agonized feelings on that occasion, did not by any means shut her auditor's eyes to the fact, that burning thrilling agony must have been endured. And that it did not pass away transiently might be plainly inferred from the fact, that a mere reference to it, after a lapse of so many years, should cause her such deep excitement and emotion. Still, that she

had been *enduringly*, habitually unhappy, Edith could not on more lengthened deliberation, believe. The old lady's countenance was a perfect index of placid contentment; her habits of life were all such as bespoke a mind at peace with the world and with itself. She enjoyed society much, but she also spent much time alone, from choice, and indeed from determination, for her society was greatly courted; her upper servants, the attached humble friends of many years, she had brought into Lancashire from her late residence, and she was already known in the neighbourhood of her present one as a generous friend to the poor. Her time never seemed to hang heavily on her hands. It was systematically apportioned between social intercourse with her acquaintance, private occupation in her closet, (that closet where Edith had seen the picture and heard its history,) and such avocations in her house and garden as a lady of refined taste and active habits might choose to assign for herself. No, Mrs. Halling was evidently happy, very happy, and not suddenly or transiently so. It was evidently retrospective as well as present, the garnered happiness of a well-regulated life.

The mental conflicts which a person of her excitable temperament and warm passions must have endured under such a trial as she had met with, ere she could subdue herself to her present calm and well-regulated tone of mind, her bitter struggles, her humbling conflicts, her burning tears, her frequent despair, her overwhelming despondency — these were known but to herself and her God.

But the result, the blessed result was apparent, and in the excellent old lady's calm benevolent countenance, cheerful unconstrained manner, and evident unsophisticated happiness, Edith read a practical illustration of the trite saying that virtue brings its own reward.

And the commentary which her own well-trained and conscientious spirit breathed, was this,—

"If Mrs. Halling sacrificed the cherished hope of her earthly existence in order to promote the happiness of a mere schoolday friend, shall I hesitate when my father's happiness is at stake?"

If she had not, during the quiet and reflective time she spent at the cottage, if she had not then finally determined her conduct, the

sight of her father's haggard countenance on her return would have resolved her. Though aware that he was looking ill, the change from day to day did not by any means strike the senses so obviously as that which now, after the absence of several days, almost appalled her; worn, and haggard, and anxious indeed he looked.

It was late in the evening when Edith, somewhat unexpectedly, returned, and her father and mother were seated, moping and silent, in the little breakfast parlour, which, from its "snugness," was often, when they were alone, preferred to their drawing-room of an evening. The sight of Edith roused and cheered them both, even though all unwitting at present of the frame of mind so propitious to their wishes, in which she returned. A sandwich tray was brought in for her, of which her mother would do the honours, while her father himself would mix the negus according to her own peculiar fancy.

Homely as such matter-of-fact services are, as the outpourings of ardent affection they touch the very heart. Accustomed as she had been her lifetime long to these domestic cor-

dialities, Edith could not now bear them. She shortened the scene as much as possible.

Complaining of fatigue, she rose to retire, and her father lighted her candle for her. She did not wish her mother "good night," for no fatigue, no anxiety, no sorrow, could ever have induced that mother to see her own pillow till she had first blessed her daughter's; so she passed her, and approached her father, who waited, as usual, to give her his nightly kiss. She stood by him an instant hesitatingly; she felt her hand tremble, and she feared her voice might do so; she felt a huskiness rising in her throat; but she exerted herself, subdued it entirely, and spoke quite distinctly.

"Father, will you write to Mr. John Balshawe, and say, that I shall be glad to see him here."

Her father started, looked at her for a moment, and then taking the candle from her hand, gently pushed her down into his own easy chair, and took another seat beside her.

"This is sudden, Edith."

"To you, father, but not to me. You promised not to tease me on the subject, and you have kindly kept your word, and this makes

it seem sudden. But I have thought much about it."

"And there is yet time, my child, for you to deliberate longer, if you wish it; and I would rather you did. Much as I desire this marriage, I should be wretched, Edith, if I hurried you immaturely into it. Take another week, another fortnight, and then we will speak of it again."

"I would rather not, father; I would rather it was settled. I have made up my mind."

"But, Edith, if you have merely made up your mind to marry because I wish it, you will make me as well as yourself miserable. Do you, my dear, like Mr. John Balshawe better than you did. Do you—do not deceive me, Edith—do you think you shall be happy?"

"Father, I do think I shall be happy."

"Then, my dear, go to rest; and take your father's warmest thanks and warmest blessing with you!"

So saying, he kissed her fondly, and motioned to her mother to take the candle and accompany her. The poor mother was en-

thusiastic in her praises; and caresses, and tears, and blessings were showered on the heart-weary Edith, which she had scarce power to accept or reject.

At length she was left alone, and could weep in peace. True, she had told her father that she thought she should be happy—and she did think so, but in a very different light from that in which her father had understood her: she looked, indeed, to that happiness, or rather that peace which is the reward of an approving conscience, but as to any happiness which was to result from the marriage, *per se*, with Mr. Balshawe, she felt in her very heart of hearts it was useless to hope it. The utmost she would venture to hope was, that in time her present extreme dislike to her intended husband might subside into indifference. A sad hope for a warm heart of twenty!

But Edith was not one to trifle in the performance of a duty: it was now become a duty to conquer, as far as in her power, her dislike to Mr. Balshawe, and to accustom herself to look on the prospect of her union with him. She *had* made up her mind to this

union, and she heroically determined at once to prepare for it.

Mr. John Balshawe had proceeded to the counting-house at an early hour, as usual, to read the post-letters; and amongst them was one in the superscription of Mr. Langshawe, which he put to one side, to be perused when the others should have been fully discussed. Of these, some required immediate replies, which he wrote himself, and others led to business details, which he proceeded at once to put *en train.* Thus it was nearly noon ere he recurred to the unopened letter.

"The old gentleman's hard up by this time, I fancy; but he'll find I'm staunch. Not an egg to be sucked; out of the shell, and no mistake! Hey! what's this?

"JOHN BALSHAWE, JUN. ESQ."

"Private and confidential."

"Not to the firm, then. By Jupiter! something's up!"

And with a look of curiosity and interest, which he had not exhibited before, Mr. John opened the letter.

The interest deepened, and the young man

read it through twice — nay, thrice, without speaking, nay almost as it seemed without breathing; but that some feeling, deeper than usual, was touched, might be seen by the crimson which flushed his cheek and forehead. Just then his father entered the counting-house.

"Won, sir, by heaven!"

"Won what, Jack?"

"Why, Miss Langshawe, to be sure."

"Give thee joy, Jack, give thee joy. And how soon dun thee stable thy horses together?"

"How soon do I noose myself, d'ye mean? why, I fancy I shall perpetrate the sin of holy matrimony soon, for the old hunks wants the money, and not a guinea will he see till I have his daughter fast."

"Well, well; I reckon that mun be as ye choose; but do not, Jack, do not be too hard on Bill Langshawe: he's my old crony, and he's an honest man, if ever there breathed one on God's earth."

"There are other honest men in the world," said young John, coolly, and with a liberality of spirit that did him infinite honour.

"Maybe so, Jack, but don't thee spoil thy

own luck. I tell thee, Bill Langshawe 's a far-sighted man: this spec. is sure to answer, and if he can but weather the corner, he 'll mint gold."

"My honoured father, now *you* speak like an honest man; it is just my own opinion, and therefore Mr. Langshawe *shall* weather the corner, and—please the pigs—*I'll* mint the gold."

"Trust thee for a sharp un all the world over," said his father, laughing heartily; "but I say, Jack, I hope now, thee means to settle down steady: upon my word! thee art too bad."

"What d 'ye mean; has my mother been preaching?"

"Thy mother! no lad; thy mother knows her place better than to preach to me; but, indeed, Jack, there 's sad talk i' th' mill. They say a pretty girl can't come near thee."

"Confound the pretty girls generally and individually," said John Balshawe, with an abrupt emphasis which startled his father, but which was caused by the young man's sudden remembrance of one individual of the class he anathematized, who might cause him some trouble now. He quickly smoothed his brow,

however, and conversed with his father for some time on the details of the day's business, in which the old gentleman had, and with full reason, the most entire confidence in him; then of the money arrangements he had made with Mr. Langshawe, which old Mr. Balshawe, though his own generous feelings towards his ancient friend would have caused him to modify greatly, could not but allow were shrewd and calculating. (We have seen that these very qualities, even though exerted to his own disadvantage, were talents that Mr. Langshawe highly appreciated.) Lastly, he spoke to his father of a genteel commodious house, about two miles from the mill, (he did not wish his bride to be on the very spot, though hereafter he might think nothing of bringing the *wife* there,) with pretty gardens and plantations, which happened now to be tenantless, and which he thought, if Miss Langshawe liked it, he would rent for a year or two. His father fully approved the plan, and made him on the spot, and without a moment's solicitation, a present "towards house-keeping" of a sum, which caused even Mr. John Balshawe to rub his hands with glee; but which would

have made many a well-deserving, and long-enduring son of the Church, raise his hands in thankfulness, as offering a certain crust of bread for the remainder of his days. It stocked Mr. John's new house with plate and wine.

Finally, the lover concluded the business of the morning by writing letters to his bride and her father. All the pride of the young man was excited and gratified: and, moreover, the best and most generous feelings of his heart were, for the time, awakened, for he really admired and liked Miss Langshawe. In short, his letters, under the influences of these elevating feelings, were such, that even Edith, the jealous-eyed Edith, was satisfied.

CHAPTER VIII.

MONEY, LOVE, AND MISERY.

"Do you know, he promised me marriage?"
SHAKSPEARE.

THAT evening Mr. John Balshawe was again in his private counting-house, or rather, we should say, in a small office or closet attached to the mill, which was so called, as being frequently used by him for the despatch of private business. Here he had desired his overlooker to send Jem Forshawe, when the hands were turned off for the night, and hither accordingly, at the appointed time, Jem Forshawe came.

He was received by his young master with that friendly cordiality which none could assume better than himself, when it suited his purpose to do so; and it did now suit his purpose.

"You wanted me, sir," said the pale ope-

rative, respectfully, and even humbly, as he stroked his hand down his forehead in token of a bow.

"Yes, Forshawe. I wanted to express my great satisfaction with your conduct; the overlooker tells me you are one of the steadiest workmen in the mill."

"I 'm much obliged to him, sir, for his good word. I do stick pretty close."

"I know you do; I know you do; I 've had my eye upon you for some time. I suppose you 're working to furnish a house."

"A house! No, sir, it 's not for the likes o' me to think of a house; if I could get the 'plenishing of a room up—that 's what I 'm trying."

"And then you mean to be married, of course."

"With your good leave, sir," said Forshawe, fingering his ghost of a hat.

"Oh, you shall have more than leave. I wish to help you forward, if I can. You are very industrious, and deserve encouragement."

Forshawe looked at his young master with a swelling heart, and wondered how people could find a word to say against him.

"Your sweetheart, I think, is called Jane—"

"Nancy, sir."

"Oh, ay! true; Nancy; Nancy Bradley."

"Nance Halliwell, sir."

"Yes, yes; how forgetful I am. Nancy Halliwell; the overlooker told me: a very pretty girl she is."

"She is a good un, sir," said Forshawe, with unwonted energy; "and that's why I love her dearly."

"Well, I trust she will make you a good wife, and I hope she will; and you shall neither of you want a friend so long as you continue industrious. And the 'plenishing is all you wait for, is it?"

"It's all *I* wait for sir; and I hope when I have it Nance will be willing. Her father and mother say they'll say nought agen it, when I've a room to tak' her to."

"That looks well; that is a great point indeed, and speaks much in your favour. Well, Forshawe, I told you I would help you, not only as a reward for your own steadiness, but also as an encouragement to others in the mill. The overlooker shall have orders to give you a day or two at your wedding, without

deducting for your absence; and here is more than you will want for the 'plenishing, but you can put it by for a rainy day. And now, I think, the sooner you get married the better."

So saying, Mr. John Balshawe counted several sovereigns into Forshawe's hand, who looked first at the glittering treasure, and then at his generous benefactor, with a heart far too full for speech.

Walking as if he trod on air, the happy and excited lover hastened towards the dwelling of his sweetheart, to tell her the joyous news, and crossed over the fields for a short cut. All memory of Nancy's late petulance, frequent coolness, and great uncertainty of mood, vanished; he thought only of his loving and affectionate, though, it must be confessed, *always* pettish, Nancy.

Fortune favoured him, for he saw her slowly pacing a retired meadow.

In his fearless, suspicionless glee, he stepped softly behind her, and before she was aware of his presence, clasped his arms round her waist. She turned quickly, but without any token of surprise or anger, but on seeing the

aggressor, flung from him with a countenance of unequivocal disdain and towering anger.

"Unhand me! keep off! how dare you touch me?"

"Nay, Nance, lass. Come, come!" said he coaxingly, and laughing at her shrewishness.

"Keep your hands off, and leave me; your company 's not wanted."

"Not expected, mayhap, Nance; but you 'll listen to what I have to say, sure*ly*."

"You can have nothing to say that concerns me to hear."

"Nothing that concerns you! Why surely, Nancy, you 're daft. Be not we to pass our lives together?"

"Maybe we are, maybe we arn't," said she.

"There 's no arn't in the matter, lass, now; we 'll be wed at yance;" and before his mistress was aware he caught her in his arms, and kissed her heartily.

She almost shrieked with rage and vexation, as she tore herself from his grasp.

"James Forshawe, I 'll have no more of this foolery. Learn to know your place. I 'm a wife for your betters, sir; I 'm not for your money."

Forshawe was startled now out of his pre-occupation.

"What do you mean, Nancy?"

"What I say. I 'm for your betters; I 'm no wife for you."

A flush passed over the young man's pale face, and slowly retired, leaving it paler than before, as a sudden idea rushed on his mind, and hints and inuendos, which had long been whispered in his incredulous ear, recurred with frightful distinctness to his memory. He felt that he had been made a dupe.

"If it is as I think," said he, very slowly, "if it is as I begin to dread it is, you are, indeed, no wife for me, Nancy, nor for any honest man. I have heard many a whisper of this; but I never would have believed your shame if you had not told it yourself."

"My shame! Hold your insolent tongue, or—"

"Silence, woman, and listen to me. Nay, you *shall* listen," said he, seizing her arm firmly, and forcing her to sit down on the hedgebacking; and such was the unwonted resolution of his manner, that even Nancy was cowed.

"Your young master has disgraced you, Nancy, and now he wants to palm you off on an honest man, as if the likes of you was for any honest man's bosom."

"James Forshawe," said Nancy, white with passion, "if it was not for what has passed between us aforetimes, and that I know I have done you some wrong, you should bitterly rue your insolence. How *dare* you, sir! speak to me in that way?"

"Oh, Nancy!" said he, not heeding her words, "how could you use a loving heart so! If I am not ower bright, it did not become *you*, Nancy, to jeer at me: if I am a soft sawney and a fool, as many folk say I am, my heart is as warm and as true as another man's; and no bird ever warmed and sheltered and fed its callow young in the soft nest more truly or more tenderly than I would have loved and cherished you. My hardest toil in the mill, Nancy, has been easy to me when I thought of you; and my sleep in the night has never refreshed me but when I dreamt of you. Oh, woman! woman!—but ye 've made this a dark world to me now!"

He buried his face in his hands, which

rested on his knees, as he sate beside her. Nancy was touched, and laid her hand on his arm: he shook it off hastily; and this little action re-awakened the bad spirit, which had been gradually yielding to better feelings.

"As you please!" said she haughtily. "I wa willing to look over your insulting words because, as I said, I feel that I have done you some wrong: but I 'd advise you not to go too far, for your own sake,—it may be worse for you!"

"How so, Nancy?"

"I might do a good deal for you, some of these days."

"When might that be, Nancy?"

"When ——" but she stopped; the secret which she had hitherto kept, and which she had promised so faithfully to keep, was trembling on her lips; but the firm-hearted girl let it not pass them.

"You would say, Nancy," said he, taking of his own accord the hand which he had just shaken away, "you would say that you will do all sorts of fine things for me when you are your master's wife?"

Nancy did not speak.

"Nancy, he will never marry you!"

"You're a foul-mouthed liar!" said Nancy passionately; "he will!"

"Nancy! never while the sun shines in heaven — never while yon moon lights the earth will you be John Balshawe's wife! He has sold you to another."

"What are you saying?"

"Your young master is tired of you; he wants to get rid of you; and I suppose he thought," and the poor fellow laughed like a maniac, "as well as others, that I was a simple Simon, and he has sold you to me for twenty sovereigns; — there they are, Nancy; count them—count them! will they make you an honest woman again, do you think?"

Nancy looked at him fearfully: she might have thought him cracked by disappointment — but *there* was the money, the glittering gold in his hand; how should he have come by that? and she had heard the overlooker call him as the hands turned out: and she had not altogether liked some of her wealthy lover's ways of late, though she had resolutely closed her eyes to the symptoms of change; and she knew, moreover, that, weak-minded

as he was, Jem Forshawe had never been known to tell a lie, or even to equivocate,—and, in short, Nancy felt so faint, so very very faint, that she was fain to loosen the handkerchief from her head, and lean back against the hedge.

After awhile she recovered some strength, and desired her despised lover to tell her all that had passed with their master.

"Tell the truth, Jem," said she, "as you hope to answer for it."

"It would be no kindness to deceive you, Nance; for you must now make up your mind for the worst."

He told her exactly all that had passed, and she did not interrupt him by word or look. She sat for some minutes after he concluded, and then rose up, and quietly moved away.

"Where are you going, Nancy?"

"I don't know," said she.

"I will take you home."

"I 'm not going home."

"Not going home?"

"No: I 'll never go home again! I won't darken their honest doors with my shame and sin."

"Your shame will bring them sorrow, Nancy, it can't be denied: but don't talk of sin: nobody lays sin to *your* door, though they may to that of your black deceiver. I do believe you thought he would marry you."

"As there is a God in heaven!" said Nancy, clasping her hands, "I thought he would. He swore he would! and I thought I should bring my mother wealth and honour: he often tempted me with that! I won't go home."

However, Forshawe contrived to get her home. Their meeting we shall not describe: the mother, the anxious watchful mother was in some sort prepared for the black tidings; but on the father they fell like a thunderbolt.

In about half an hour Forshawe darted from the cottage as if the Furies were at his heels, and took the direct road to the mill. He rapped at the overlooker's door in a way to startle all the inmates, and asked if Mr. John was in the mill, for he must see him. The answer from the angry and astonished overlooker was, that Mr. John had been gone home an hour, and that it would be as well if Forshawe let his business cool till morning. This

advice Forshawe heeded not, even if he heard it; but speeding on to Mr. Balshawe's house, knocked loudly at the principal entrance, and asked for Mr. John: the servant, not liking the querist's looks, replied that Mr. John was engaged, and not to be seen. But the maddened operative rushed past, just as Mrs. Balshawe opened the door of a small parlour, giving Forshawe a glimpse of several persons within, and his young master amongst them. In he rushed whilst the astonished and somewhat alarmed mistress of the house still held the door-handle.

"There, sir! take your gold! — there! — there! — there! — there!" And with every emphatic particle he flung down a sovereign, casting them in this manner one by one till he had told down the whole twenty. "Count them, sir," he said, his eyes glaring, and his cheeks and lips as white as ashes; "count them out; see that they be all right; and treasure them, and take them to hell with you!" And before any one present had sufficiently recovered from their astonishment to stop him or speak to him, Forshawe was out of the house, and half way down the plantation.

Mrs. Balshawe, somewhat alarmed, was the first who spoke:—

"What is this, John? What is the meaning of this?"

But Mr. John, though pretty considerably astonished, had his wits fully about him, and was, moreover, not exactly disposed to take his mother into his confidence.

"My dear mother, it is a mere matter of business, which you would not understand were I to explain it," said he, as he coolly took up and pocketed the sovereigns, giving his companions a wink at the same time. "But I will be obliged to you if you will send,—or step down, and then there will be no mistake,—to the overlooker's, and tell him that Jem Forshawe is dismissed, and he must not admit him to the mill to-morrow."

"So that pale-faced lad's Jem Forshawe, is it?" said old Mr. Balshawe. "Ah, Jack, Jack!" continued he, "I 'm afeerd thee 'll never mend."

Mrs. Balshawe's errand to the overlooker was unnecessary,—Jem Forshawe did not present himself for admission at the mill next morning.

CHAPTER IX.

COTTONOCRACY FESTIVAL.

"The minutes, winged with down, dance pleasing on."

"The world is here."

Our detail of the many-coloured incidents of individual life must merge for a few moments in the broad display of gaieties, which now for the first time affected the town near which our characters have been disporting. The first grand festival was at hand,—the Manchester musical meeting of 18—. It had frequently been a matter of wonder that a large, populous, wealthy town, a town which had attained a higher celebrity for the superior quality of its usual public concerts than perhaps any other out of London, should still never have been the scene of one of those elaborate and fascinating carnivals, a musical festival. However, the time was now come, and great and overwhelming was the excitement with which it was anticipated. "*Public*

anxiety," said one of the oracles of the day, "has in no degree abated; and as each day brings us nearer to this new era in the history of our town, every one appears more ardently solicitous to add lustre and importance to it. Nor is this feeling of *honest exultation* and *anticipated delight* at the festival by any means confined to the immediate neighbourhood of Manchester. Few, save those who from official stations or public duty have the means of ascertaining the intentions of the wealthy and respectable of other and distant towns, could for a moment imagine the *unrestrained eagerness* that almost *universally exists* in families of the *first respectability* to be with us in that week, to swell the coffers of our charities, and add to the festivities of the town."

Certainly the excitement in the town and its neighbourhood was extreme, and many an hospitable mansion was thronged to its utmost corner. Mr. Langshawe's was no exception to the general rule; and besides Mr. John Balshawe, now openly acknowledged and recognized as Edith's lover, and Miss Wolstenholme, (who from her own mothers's declining

to enter into these festivities, was glad to place herself under Mrs. Langshawe's protection,) there were many other guests all eager to enjoy themselves to the utmost: fortunately for Edith, too eager in this pursuit to observe her with their usual accuracy. Mr. Henry Wolstenholme was also there, ostensibly to be near his sister Harriet; but Harriet wanted him not. No one, of course, thought of interfering with young Mr. Balshawe's claim to Miss Langshawe in those thousand-and-one *petits soins* which idle young gentlemen are so happy to pay to handsome young ladies; and she being unapproachable, Miss Wolstenholme found her own attractions wonderfully increased. As we have seen, she was no very decided enemy to coquetry; in fact, she was "a desperate flirt;" and it was with no small surprise that her friends beheld her neglect her present opportunities in a most unaccountable manner. But so it was; and all the well-dressed dandies of the day felt themselves sinking into nothingness before the magnificent proportions and stentorian "haw! haw!" of a new rival, Mr. Ashworth. None of the party could guess whether he were in joke

or earnest, so ludicrous was the manner in which at times he declared himself "her most humble and obsequious slave;" but when he said he would even adventure to dance for her good will, and she in some apparent alarm deprecated the idea, then indeed the lady's younger admirers pulled up their shirt collars, passed their fingers through their hair, sat an inch and a half taller at least, and thought the day their own.

To return:

Preparations for the festival were made indeed with an earnestness of purpose and a recklessness of expense which were almost unparalleled, and the energies of the whole people were simultaneously directed to this one object with an intensity that was really, considering the cause, somewhat ludicrous. Of course, too, there were many minor details, with which the "talented inhabitants of the metropolis of the North" could hardly be supposed conversant, seeing that they had been out of the sphere of their practical experience. In these difficulties, the immaculate and infallible authorities, the journals of the day, were resorted to.

"*To the Editor of the Manchester* ——.

"SIR,

"You will much oblige a constant reader by informing him whether persons going to the fancy dress ball will be admitted in Highland dresses, with the cap and feathers, plaid coat and kilt, on; and also whether jockies will be admitted with top boots and spurs,—for instance, the rider of Bessy Bedlam for the great St. Leger.

"Your complying will much oblige yours,

"BENEVOLENCE."

"SIR,

"I am one of those individuals who are extremely fond of the article called *comfort;* and it being my intention, during the festival, to attend the three mornings at the church, I *consider it a duty I owe myself* to apprise you, that I have been in the company of several ladies, who declare it is their *decided intention* to appear in *high head-dresses.* Now, although I am generally considered to manifest a *remarkable degree* of politeness towards the ladies, nevertheless, I think I should feel excessively sore

should a lady happen *to sit before* ME with a monstrous head-dress, thereby preventing me from taking any interest in what might be going forward. I have expostulated with them, to no purpose; therefore as *a final resource*, I shall trouble you to insert this in your paper, and at the same time, I should wish my fair readers not only to consult their own feelings on the subject but also those of

"A BACHELOR."

And so on *ad infinitum*.

But the time came when all doubt and dubitations were lost in certainty, and "after a very wet and tempestuous night, the sun broke out with great brilliancy, and *smiled* upon the commencement of the festival."

The Old Church — rendered as unlike a church as it was possible to be — was thronged to its very farthest echo by brilliantly-attired crowds, with radiant smiling faces. The performances were, as had been anticipated, admirable; the Lancashire chorus-singers, always at home in Handel, acquitted themselves with their wonted ability, and fully maintained their

high character. The concerts and the balls went off with great *éclat*, and all interest at length merged in the "Grand Fancy Ball," the last scene of the carnival in which ladies were participators.

The theatre and the assembly-rooms were thrown together by means of a temporary building, which took in the intervening street, and formed a supper-room, calculated to sup seven hundred people at once; fitted with pink and white draperies, interspersed with mirrors, and brilliantly lighted with gas, for which convenience a fresh pipe had previously been laid along the street.

The theatre assumed the appearance of a magnificent Turkish tent, with a vaulted ceiling, pink and white, hung round with fluted pink and white draperies, and resting upon twelve large oblong pillars (of drapery). "Such a *coup d'œil* surpasses any attempt at description" — the appearance was "as one of the enchanted palaces, described in the Eastern tales."

Truly it was so; and never did "Manchester manufactures" assume a more imposing effect

than in these same "fluted draperies." The three thousand four hundred people, too, who from eight o'clock on Friday night until seven o'clock on Saturday morning, did full honour to this "enchanted scene," were equally marvellous. So literally had they attended to the wishes of the committee, expressed previously to the ball, that no costume appertaining to common life should be assumed—so gorgeously had they displayed the desired "fancy" in their attire, that magnificence outdid itself; and many wished that some recusants in "Quaker's garb," or in "simple peasant attire," had found their way there, in order to relieve the eye-aching brilliancy of the general mass. But no: shining brigands and glistering virgins of the sun were common as dirt; Turkish sultans and Circassian slaves displayed their spangled drapery to little effect where spangles were so common:

> "Th' Assyrian pomp, the Persian pride,
> Greeks' glory, and the Romans'—"

were huddled into one undistinguishable throng, and it may, we think, be received as indubit-

able proof of the laudable anxiety of the Mancunians to fulfil the wishes of the committee to the utmost, in the abrogation of every-day attire, when we name, that amongst the three thousand four hundred revellers it was said there were five hundred "Spanish ladies," and fifty Earls of Leicester.

CHAPTER X.

SIR ROBERT PEEL AND THE COTTONOCRACY.

"With an anxious look
Their hats they took,
And nimbly walk'd,
And briskly talk'd,
And said 'O dear,
What glorious cheer!'"

"He spoke, and paused, and looked, and smiled."

The carnival to which we have thus slightly alluded was introductory to a scene which had a fatal effect on one of the personages of our veracious *historiette*. Mr. (now Sir Robert) Peel, a member of the then existing administration, of which the Duke of Wellington was the head, had accepted an invitation to Manchester, and had honoured all the festivities with his presence. The respectful greeting which his lofty station and high character secured for him, was rendered still more cor-

dial and heartfelt as time went on, by the unvarying kindly courtesy he displayed to all of every class who thronged round him, and by his cheerful and pleased participation in gaieties which, however rare to the generality of Manchester people, could have no charm of novelty for him. The few who were previously acquainted with Mr. Peel were in nowise suprised at this *bonhommie;* others, perhaps, were; for it is a quality not invariably to be found in him who has "achieved greatness."

It had been previously arranged that Mr. Peel's presence should be solicited at a public dinner, to take place immediately after the festival, and accordingly, on the subsequent Monday, it — to borrow a sporting phrase — "came off." The high tory party professed to look on it as a *general* token of respect to the right honourable gentleman; but others, with equal respect for his high talents and admirable character, asserted, and with some show of reason, that it was absolutely an "Anti-Catholic demonstration." For at this time the important question of "Catholic Emancipation" was uppermost in men's minds, and it was well

known that it was to be again mooted in parliament, to some definitive purpose, in the ensuing session.

However, on the evening appointed, five hundred gentlemen wended their way to the town-hall, and amongst them, most of those immortalised in this little book. Mr. Ainsley was loyal and protestant to the backbone; so was Mr. Langshawe; and so, *par excellence*, were Mr. Balshawe and his son.

On the announcement of dinner, the first important business was for each to secure his allotted seat in the great room of the Hall, which then unfinished, had been hastily prepared for the occasion with material of the same substantial fabric as that which had glistened so gaily in the theatre, but of a graver countenance, being "light stone colour;" and the windows, "the cornices of which were gilt and brilliantly burnished, were ornamented with flowing crimson curtains, and the ceiling was beautifully formed into panels in the centre, with rosettes at the angles." The room was lighted with bronze gas-chandeliers, and the sixteen tables were so arranged as that "each person enjoyed the pleasure of a clear and

uninterrupted view of the interesting personage in honour of whom the company had assembled."

But it may fairly be predicated that even that "interesting personage" was for a time thrown into the shade by the nearer view of, amongst other things, "four *large* turbot; six *large* cod; two *large* salmon; twenty dishes of soles; one hundred lobsters; thirty-two tureens of turtle; two haunches of venison; four necks do.; one *large* baron of beef; six stewed rounds and rumps do.; four saddles of mutton; eight roast pigs; ten turkeys; — geese;* sixteen pigeon pies; sixteen venison pasties; six fillets and breasts of veal; one hundred dishes of game, viz. black game, grouse, partridges, hares; five hundred jellies, blanc manges, pastries, custards, puddings," &c.

But "all that 's bright must fade;" and if we were rightly informed, these bright things faded away with pretty considerable celerity, leaving no intervening shadow to dim the effulgent lustre of the personage in whose

* Is the omission of the number of geese accidental? We copy the journal of the day *verbatim et literatim.*

honour they had been collocated. And the business of the evening began. After the toasts which have usually precedence had been duly honoured, the health of the right honourable secretary was drunk, amidst a tumult of applause which we will not venture to describe on paper. After some degree of order had been restored, Mr. Peel rose to acknowledge the toast; and then did every individual of the five hundred assembled fix himself in his place, and most devoutly address himself to listen.

Mr. Peel was "not ashamed of the emotions which overpowered him, nor did he wish himself so constituted as to be able to remain unmoved under such flattering demonstrations of respect and confidence. Reflections, in usual circumstances, the result of years of experience had passed through his mind in one short week. He would defy any man of reflection, any man not blinded by a sense of his own interests and pleasures, to come to that great city without finding the most ample scope for serious thought. He had said 'great city' advisedly; for, judging it by wealth and population, by the great in-

fluence it had in the scale of the empire, and by its rank in the polished world, it fully deserved the name." (*This touched the cotton-ocracy to their very hearts' core, and they responded to the sentiment with loud and continued cheers.*) "If he might compare great things with small, Manchester had, like many of her sons, established her own patent of nobility." (*cheers.*) "Let her rank, then, where she is entitled to rank, among the proud capitals of the civilized world." (*Cheers loud and prolonged.*)

Mr. Peel referred to the time when Manchester was unknown, save as the station of a Roman encampment; with this he proceeded to contrast her present condition, of which he drew so flattering a picture, representing the welfare of the nation at large as being so indissolubly connected with *her* well-doing, that he fairly wiled away the very hearts of the Mancunians.

"If he be a minister, charged with the responsible duty of presiding over the destinies of his country, he will find here the grounds for increased confidence in the power and resources of his native land. He will under-

stand by what mysterious means this country has been enabled to rule the destinies of remote empires, in spite of the limits of her own soil, and her comparatively small population. He will see how those deficiencies have been compensated, and England has been raised to an unrivaled station among the nations of the civilized world." (*Long-continued cheering.*) "He will understand why it is that she has flourished in spite of the predictions of those prophets of misfortune, who every year, for the last hundred years, have foretold her immediate downfal; why it is that, rejecting the counsels of the timid and desponding, she has risen buoyant through a thousand difficulties, and seen the final triumph of many a good cause. He will find convincing proof, a proof visible to his senses, that the welfare of the land is bound up inseparably with the prosperity of manufacturing industry."

Thus Mr. Peel went on, beguiling, as we have said, the very hearts of his rapt auditors; here and there one ventured to murmur, "I wish he'd come to the point," but was quickly silenced by his delighted neighbour. At

length, however, he did seem to be coming "to the point."

"I ought to apologise for having so long trespassed on your patience on subjects not calculated to provoke the interest and excitement to which other topics of discussion might give rise." (*Here there was a general movement.*) "I do not forget that I am a public man;" (*now the buzz and the subdued excitement were great indeed, and it was some little time before the Right Hon. gentleman could proceed.*) "I do not conceal from myself that the public principles on which I have acted are the principles approved by a great majority of those who hear me. The whole course of my public life has been directed by a deep respect for the ancient institutions of my country;' (*applause,*) 'not from any superstitious motives, or because they are ancient, but because of their practical utility,—because they have given that high tone of character for which English noblemen, English gentlemen, English merchants, and all Englishmen are known." (*Cheers.*) "It is not inconsistent with the sincerest reverence for them, and for the principles on which they rest, to profit by the

progress of improvement and by experience, and to repair the partial defects, and supply the occasional deficiencies which are inseparable from the lapse of time, and the changes of society. I have been an innovator on the laws, but not with a rash and unsparing hand, not disturbing the foundations of a noble edifice, but feeling confident in the strength of those foundations, feeling assured that we could with safety brush away the cobwebs, and remove the useless rubbish that time or neglect had accumulated."

After some further allusions to his own private feelings as connected with his flattering reception in the town, the right honorable gentleman sat down amid tumultuous cheering.

"I say," said young Balshawe, after discussing in silence two or three glasses of claret —"it seems to me that Peel has said nothing, after all."

"Said nothing!—what d'ye mean?"

"Why, he's said nothing,—in fact; we don't know any more than when he began what he thinks or means."

"Why, you lubber," rejoined his father, who

was already considerably excited, "would you have him peach,—tell tales out o' school, man? I say he 's a fine fellow, and the speech is just what it should be."

"So do I."

"So do I," ran round on every side.

"So *don't* I," persisted Mr. John Balshawe; "but let that pass."

"He spoke with veneration," said Mr. Ainsley "of the ancient institutions of the country."

"Yes," sneered another, "but he said he could 'brush the dust away,' and so perhaps if the dust sticks fast, he may not hesitate to *cut* it away."

"He 's flamming us," said young Balshawe, "*I* say."

But those who felt any misgivings were in proportion to the rest but as drops of water in the ocean, and all discussions were hushed as the chairman gave—

"Protestant Ascendancy, of which our right honourable guest is one of the ablest, most zealous, and persevering supporters."

In an instant the whole company were on the benches; the noise was perfectly tremendous;

hands waved to and fro like a sea, the shouting was vociferous, and the cheering, the stamping, perfectly overwhelming: and at length some lofty spirits, among whom was young Balshawe, mounted on the tables, in the plenitude of their zeal, but were removed before the tumult had become, as it seemed but too likely to become, utterly immitigable.

One distinguished gentleman of the company expressed the pleasure he felt in "manifesting this union of sentiment in the presence of one of the most distinguished champions of the rights and liberties of Protestant Ascendancy in Church and State."

Another spoke still more closely *to the point*. "He stood before them proud in being placed on the right hand of that statesman whom he had ever revered with unmixed regard. By that great man's example he pledged himself to abide, as true as shadow to substance, as echo to sound. He pledged himself to follow him, looking at him as the leader of our political creed, and because he acknowledged him as the most able and eloquent defender of the religion, liberties, and laws of his country. As the personal friend

of the late lamented Duke of York, he looked upon him as the uncorrupted and incorruptible champion of Protestantism." (*Tremendous cheering.*)

It need hardly be said, that the more definite expression of opinion and purpose from Mr. Peel, to which some of the company looked, and to which they used every artifice to lead him, was not elicited. At a late, or rather an early hour, the boroughreeve left the chair, accompanied by this honoured visitor, and a large proportion of the company. The remaining portion, however, elected another chairman, and comfortably squared their elbows for a deep carouse. It proceeded with the utmost harmony and concord for a considerable time, and was at last interrupted by Mr. Balshawe, senior, falling heavily under the table. His son, to whom this circumstance was too usual to cause any anxiety, was proceeding coolly to raise him, assisted by some other gentlemen, when an exclamation of alarm from one of these awakened him from his tipsy stupefaction. This gentleman happened to be a surgeon, and most fortunate it proved that he was so, since profuse and instantaneous bleeding offered the

only chance of life to the degraded being who was now labouring under a fit of apoplexy. As soon as possible he was removed to the adjoining hotel, totally insensible, and in a most precarious state.

In a few hours, speeded by the kind and respectful wishes of all with whom he had been associating, Mr. Peel was on his way from Manchester, and the numerous strangers who had thronged the town were likewise hasting from it with all celerity. In a few days the old church was restored to, not its wonted aspect, for material alterations were made, but its wonted use; the fancy dresses (which, however, afterwards glittered at many a private ball) were "put by;" the habits of business, which had been so unusually broken in upon, were soon again in full activity, and the metropolis of the North had resumed its accustomed aspect.

After alternating for some days between life and death, Mr. Balshawe's constitution, aided as it had been by instantaneous surgical applications, triumphed in some degree over the shock it had received. We say, in some degree, for though his bodily health was restored, his

mind never was. He lives a pitiable object of mental imbecility, vegetating rather than living in his beautiful mansion, a burthen to himself and to all around him. His son, of course, took the entire responsibility of the business, a task to which he was fully competent, and which has thriven in his hands.

CHAPTER XI.

A CATASTROPHE.

"Of most disastrous chances
Of moving accidents."

SHAKSPEARE.

WE shall not interrupt the course of our story to introduce the reader to all the Neapolitan sights, shows, and rarities, which beguiled the time of our travellers for several weeks. They were speedily established in a palazzo on the Vomero, commanding a view of the magnificent bay and its islands, which lay bathed in that lovely purple light which has often been remarked by travellers as a peculiar attribute of these beautiful shores; the space between the palazzo and the bay was occupied by richly-planted gardens, groves, and terraces, statues and fountains, and all the *et cætera* of these voluptuous incentives to luxury and imagination. Here did Bianca's voice float more harmoniously than ever, and here did Mr.

Walmsley's propensity for dreaming receive ample food on which to dilate, while Mr. Luttrell, during the first weeks of their sojourn, was fully occupied by the business which had taken him to Naples.

Nevertheless, they all found time to visit the *Chiaja* of an evening, and at first forgot the bustle of the scene in its novelty. To Frank, at least, the stir of Naples was perfectly marvellous, and he looked with amused interest on the busy streets, with their moveable and gaily painted shops, of various kinds of refreshments; with the temporary stages on which Punch exhibited his wit, and other aspirants for public favour their various conjurations; on the strange carriages, and stranger people, in their dirty and gaudy costume (many of them with guitars), who made the streets vocal with mirth and melody.

But it was only during its novelty that this excitement pleased; but the environs were crowded with objects of the most extreme interest to an enlightened mind, and the shores of Baiæ, the tomb of Virgil, the awful remains of the exhumed cities, these, and many other objects, which they visited with the utmost

delight, caused their days to speed swiftly away.

One great expedition, which had dwelt on Frank's imagination more than anything else, remained to be achieved: this was the ascent of Vesuvius. It is said that the Neapolitans themselves, though born and reared under its shadow, consider "the mountain" as the grand attraction of their city; how much, how very much must that attraction be enhanced to one whose only idea of a burning mountain is derived from a picture.

Frank was determined to ascend Vesuvius, and Mr. Luttrell to accompany him; and together they set off, despite the remonstrances of Bianca, who did not like the idea. Many were the charges she gave them, and which they laughingly answered as they left the carriage at Portici, whither she had driven with them.

Here they were almost torn to pieces by the vociferous civilities of the lazzaroni,—men, women, and children,—guides up the mountain, who congregate here with mules, asses, and portable chairs, for hire; and each of whom was naturally anxious to convince the visitors that

he, and he alone, was deserving of attention. Frank found himself almost lifted on a mule's back—he not consenting the while—whilst he was heedlessly gazing at an Italian girl, evidently only of the rank of a peasant, who, dressed in a short velvet jacket, edged with gold lace, and a gay-coloured silk petticoat and apron, was spinning as she walked about, her distaff being fastened to her waist. The dress of all these people looked very gay, though tawdry and dirty: the habiliments of the women were mostly of silk, which struck Frank with some surprise. Had Mr. John Balshawe been there he would have remembered in a moment, that silk is *the cotton* of Italy.

But Mr. Walmsley was awakened from his musings by the vociferations around him: this had evidently been an unpropitious day for the lazzaroni of the mountain; there had been no visitors to it; and consequently each separate "establishment" was more than usually eager to appropriate the welcome curiosity-hunters to itself. At length Mr. Luttrell made his choice; he and Frank each mounted a mule, and, accompanied by three guides, hoped now to escape the clamour

by which they were deafened. This was not done immediately, however: the rejected parties seemed to find vituperation a great relief to their disappointment, and absolutely followed for a considerable distance, abusing the guides whom the travellers had chosen.

They proceeded on a road turning steeply from the sea, across the vineyards from which the celebrated wine called Lacrymæ Christi is made. It is supposed that the subterranean heat of the mountain gives a peculiar flavour to this grape: it does not, however, grow at any very great elevation; and, on passing these, the travellers quickly lost all traces of cultivation, as they picked their way across barren and desolate plains, where nothing was seen but beds and streams of lava, of different ages and aspects, till they came to a narrow ridge of land, which, running down the valley between the two summits of Vesuvius, boasts of a few trees.

Here, sheltered by these trees, is the celebrated hermitage, a simple-looking, pretty building, where travellers usually stop for the refreshment of a biscuit and a little of the wine of the mountain.

On leaving the shady ridge in which the hermitage is situated, the track again lay over wide and dreary ridges of blackened lava, which now reflecting the sun from its bare, unsheltered surface, was oppressively hot and fatiguing. Mr. Luttrell found it so, and was compelled to acknowledge that he did, and Frank would gladly have had him return at once to the hermitage, but he would not hear of it. So they proceeded to the Atrio di Cavallo, where the horses are usually left; the rest of the pilgrimage being necessarily performed on foot.

To this Mr. Luttrell found himself quite unequal, though he insisted on making the attempt. But this part of the ascent is nearly perpendicular, and the unaccustomed pilgrim can only achieve it by holding firmly by a leathern strap, which the guide puts round his own waist, and by stepping precisely in the footsteps which that guide quits. After proceeding in this manner for a few steps, Mr. Luttrell acknowledged his inability to proceed; and it was soon decided that one guide should return with him, whilst the other two proceeded to the summit with Mr. Walmsley.

When Frank attained this summit, the mag-

nificent splendour of the prospect which opened upon him around, and the awful sublimity of the scene immediately touching him, quickly made him forget fatigue, Mr. Luttrell, and everything else. He lingered on the mountain a long, long time.

At length he prepared to go, and was both amused and agreeably surprised at the quickness and facility with which that cone was descended, of which the ascent had been so hazardous and wearisome.

He found his guides good-natured, intelligent, and chatty, and as the Italian language was now perfectly facile to him, he enjoyed his homeward route much; stopping frequently to survey the mountain in its different phases, and asking many questions about the various strata of lava, their ages, and directions. On these points the guides are mostly well-informed, and pleased to impart their information. Walmsley was just smiling within himself at the idea of the learned figure he should now make to Bianca on his return home, when a faint cry of distress met his ears: he started, and listened; and it was repeated in fuller tones, and his heart thrilled within him at the idea that he could

recognise Mr. Luttrell's accents in the cry. He eagerly pressed forward,— so eagerly indeed and suddenly, that if one of the guides had not quickly caught the bridle of his mule, even that sure-footed animal would have been down. They themselves, however, showed no disposition to linger, and the trio pressed on, and proceeded for some distance, but no object could they discern but the seamed and calcined earth all around, and the glowing sky above. Frank was in agony: he had wrought himself up to the full belief that the cry was Mr. Luttrell's, and yet he was sure that it could never have reached from this place to the spot where he first had heard it. The men seemed perplexed, and were debating earnestly with each other, when the cry was heard again, more faintly; and now it came from behind. They had evidently passed the sufferer, whomsoever he might be.

They retraced their steps carefully; and fortunately faint sounds were still heard at intervals, which guided them at length to the person, none other than Mr. Luttrell, who, wounded, bleeding, and apparently nearly expiring, was laid behind a rock of lava a little

way from the track; and so laid as to be concealed from those traversing the usual path.

To describe Frank's horror would be impossible: it almost paralysed him. The guides, however, were most alert and kind; they bound their handkerchiefs round Mr. Luttrell's side, placed him across Mr. Walmsley's mule, and carefully supported him to Portici, where his own carriage awaited him. All this time Frank was in an agony of suspense, for he literally knew not whether his friend was living or dead, so deep was the swoon which held him.

A surgeon soon restored him to sensibility, and then proceeded to examine his wounds: he was severely stabbed with a stiletto in two places, and, moreover, there was a serious hurt on the head, which appeared to have been caused by the blow of some heavy weapon. He declined at present to give any definitive opinion of his patient's condition.

When, after a night of anxiety and watching, he was appealed to again in the morning, the surgeon plainly told Frank that he could give him no hope. A younger person might possibly have surmounted these injuries, but Mr.

Luttrell's age precluded hope. He would recruit, rally for a few days, probably weeks, but there was not the remotest chance of his ultimate recovery. He grieved to give such an opinion, but Mr. Luttrell might have arrangements of consequence to make, and he, the surgeon, thought it his duty to inform the gentleman's friend of the truth.

For some time Mr. Luttrell continued extremely weak, and apparently hardly conscious of what was passing around him, and then, as the surgeon had prognosticated, he began to revive, and recruited so much that Frank, in glee, intimated a hope to the medical attendant that he was mistaken in his gloomy prognostications. This gentleman shook his head gravely, and merely replied, "Did I not foretel also this transient recovery?" And Frank felt that his hopes were futile.

Mr. Luttrell told Frank, that he did not think that the ruffian who had murdered him, and who, as our readers will have guessed, was the guide, had at all intended to kill him; that robbery was his only purpose; but that he himself, with a rashness which he now bitterly condemned, had positively refused to give up

his purse, and had attempted to defend himself; and had not only done so earnestly, but had shouted so strenuously for assistance, in the hope that Frank, even then might be on his return, and within hearing, that the robber had, probably in desperation, given the murderous blows. Mr. Luttrell supposed that he must have fainted, and that the man, thinking him dead, had carried him from the road for concealment; he had, on recovering his senses again, endeavoured to call for help; and these later cries must have been what Mr. Walmsley heard.

The stout-hearted old gentleman requested a private interview with his surgeon, which Frank felt assured was for the purpose of learning his real state. And he was fully confirmed in this opinion, when a Naples gentleman of the legal profession was called in, and interviews held with him whenever the doctor would permit them, and when he himself wrote, at Mr. Luttrell's request, to that gentleman's own man of business at Genoa, requesting his presence without delay at Naples. It was evident that the good old gentleman was setting his house in order before he died.

For the rest, the faithful Caterina was ever hovering about, and Frank and Bianca were his constant attendants; oftentimes together, but never was he without the company and solace of one or other of them, except during the professional visits of the surgeon and lawyers. His weakness, already returned, was fast increasing upon him; but he calmly bowed to the fiat, and appeared not only resigned, but cheerful.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FLIT.

"Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost."

"Here I and Sorrow sit."

SHAKSPEARE.

"WELL, Joe, what tidings? — what news? Where is she? What does he say?"

"Nothing; he tells me nothing. May—"

We cannot write down the curse which was wrung from the agony of the broken-hearted father on the destroyer of his child.

"What did you say to him?"

"Say!—everything that a humbled wretch like me could say. I begged, I implored,—nay, I went down on my knees, wife—down on my knees on the bare ground to him, and implored him to tell me where she was. I felt at that minute as if I could forgive him all—everything, if so be I could get my child again.

He swears he knows nothing of her. But what 's an oath to him!"

Halliwell flung himself into the loom shop, and shut the door after him: nobody durst follow him. His poor wife leaned against the chimney, weeping silently; her baby cried unheeded in the cradle; the other little ones were rollicking about the dirty floor, and some bigger ones were making futile and ill-directed efforts to disentangle some hanks of yarn, which lay in matted heaps on one of the wheels, and quarreling meanwhile as to whose fault it was that it was so entangled. The big girl was looking heedlessly through the dim and undusted casement, and the big boys were out bird-nesting. The looms were all silent; none of the wonted merry din of labour was heard in the cottage; and the pet plants in the little garden were sickening and dying for want of the accustomed watering-pot. The cottage hearth was unsightly with the accumulation of the refuse and ashes of the preceding days; the dust lay thick on the bright carved oaken press; and the children's soiled and cast-off garments lay littering and unsightly around. Misery and desolation had

entered this once happy and well-ordered abode.

Nancy had disappeared, and had now not been heard of for some time. At first the hope of her speedy return had buoyed up her parents; and, trusting to this, and not wishing to spread the knowledge of their degradation, they had kept her absence secret. But, as time passed and no tidings came of her, their grief had its way. Their neighbours were called in, and, one and all, with the sincerest sympathy, assisted in a search for the poor girl; but it was unsuccessful. At last, some one suggested that her seducer might have concealed her, and, in a mingled agony of hope and fear, Halliwell hastened to him. The result we know. Mr. John Balshawe denied all knowledge of the fugitive's proceedings; but nobody believed him.

And yet Mr. John spoke truly, quite truly. He was both astonished and shocked at Halliwell's inquiry; and this the father might have read in his countenance, if his own overpowering agony had not taken away the power of observation. He had never seen either Nancy or Forshawe since the evening of his interview

with the latter; but he entertained no doubt of their union as soon as Nancy discovered that her high aspirations were nought: and when they were married, and "come to their senses" again, they might be re-admitted to the mill, and there would be twenty ways in which he might befriend them, if they kept their own council, and behaved discreetly. So that having thus smoothly and naturally re-arranged all awkward circumstances, Mr. John had almost dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

But Halliwell's visit awakened him from these pleasant delusions. He really was shocked and grieved, and ready, at the moment, to make any possible reparation. Money was the only one which occurred to him, and, quick as thought, his purse was in his hand; but something in the father's countenance warned him to forbear. He did not offer it then; but when the afflicted father left him, he had the full purpose of doing so afterwards, and even of instituting a search for Nancy, and restoring her to her parents; but, as the first excitement of his feelings wore away, his selfishness resumed its accustomed sway, and on

considering the matter more coolly, he came to the determination that, on account of other circumstances, he had better appear in it as little as possible; he had better, in fact, do nothing.

And for some little time longer the bereaved and afflicted family did nothing. Day after day passed in disconsolate idleness. They rose in the morning to misery; they lay down at night to wrestle with gloomy thoughts. But this could not last. Their little stock of hoarded money was expended, and their looms were empty.

"Woman!" said Halliwell to his wife, "we mun quit this place: I canna stay here."

"But where mun we go, Joe?"

"I know not, and I care not: but here I wunna stay. Get more work from that man! —my very bread would choke me!"

"But we may get it from another mill?"

"Not easily, wife: work 's not o'er rife just now: it 's not just to be had for the asking, as you know. I have had work from Balshawe's mill for forty-three year. I began to wind when I wur six year old,—and I 'm not known any where else."

"But you can have a ca*rak*tur, Joe."

"Aye, sure*ly* I can: my own ca*rak*tur in one hand, and my girl's shame in another. Woman! woman! I 've lived here for fifty year, and my father afore me, and never needed to hang my head. I canna bide it now. We mun go!"

"Well, Joe, well,—we will go! But the childer?"

"The childer must tramp wi' us: I 'm sure old widow Hoskins will take care of the babby till we 're settled somewhere."

"No, no! Joe, no! I canna leave the babby—I 'll carry the babby. I canna want her!"

"She 's a lungeous weight, woman, to carry, and we 'se far to travel."

"She 's no' so heavy as my heart would be without her: I mun tak' her."

"Well, well, wife, dunna greet, dunna greet, ye shall tak' her; mayhap I can get ye both a lift o' th' road."

So the poor woman set herself earnestly to work in preparation for this unhappy flitting, and, melancholy as the prospect was, she yet felt happier than she had done for some time,

in the relief to her thoughts which peremptory active exertion brought with it.

Halliwell packed up the bedding, and a few other things, of no great bulk, which he considered most valuable, and sent them by the canal, which passed close to this village, and on which freightage was very cheap, to a large manufacturing town, about forty miles off. All the rest of his little property, of every description, he had disposed of as it stood.

It was a drizzling misty morning, cold for the season, and gloomy, when this large and hitherto happy and united family, stood outside the door of the cottage in which they had been born and reared. The father passed sturdily on, carrying a child in one arm and holding another by the hand; he looked neither to the right nor left, and, with delicate kindness nobody spoke to him. But cakes, and toffies, and trinkets, were thrust into the children's hands as they passed, and the wife, who followed with her baby, and the bigger children, received and responded to many a cordial farewell, for the neighbours were all afloat to watch the departure of their old associates. Many sincere regrets were spoken, and a few

tears were shed, which somewhat excited the surprise of the Jew broker, who had come to secure the goods he had purchased. He stood in the doorway of the deserted cottage, surveying the scene, and as the wandering group turned the corner of the lane he shrugged his shoulders and withdrew into the house.

As he approached the corner of another lane which led to Balshawe's mill, Halliwell was quickening his speed, but met with an unexpected interruption. It was none other than the overlooker himself.

"Halliwell, I understand you're going to ——, to look for work?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Well, you may not be the worse of a friend's help there. I have known you many years as a sober, honest, industrious man, and here's a letter to the overlooker of Hoskin's and Barnstead's mill, to say as much. Nay, read it, man, read it, if you are at all suspicious."

Halliwell did read it, and having offered the overlooker his earnest and heartfelt thanks, he went on his way with a lightened spirit. Per-

haps, if he had known all, poor and destitute as he was, he would have rejected the letter with scorn; but things were better managed.

No one is altogether bad, certainly Mr. John Balshawe was not; and, if his childhood and youth had had the wholesome restraint which a prudent parent would have imposed, the beneficent culture which a religious and virtuous parent would have bestowed, the fruit of his manhood would probably have been very different. His first feeling, on hearing of the Halliwell family's intended migration, was one of unmixed satisfaction at their entirely removing themselves from his path, mingled with some chuckling at their "playing so capitally into his hands." But conscience was not altogether dead within him, and when he remembered their poverty, their large family, the certain expense and risk, and the very uncertain success of such a removal, he felt, to use his own term, "very all-overish," and was almost tempted to wish that he had not played off so many "monkey shines."

However, having, while under the influence of these feelings, contrived to make himself acquainted with the place of Halliwell's desti-

nation, he wrote to a wealthy and first-rate "firm" there, such a letter as he knew would cause the emigrant to be instantly taken into employment, whilst he also made it is own personal request that his name should not be in any way referred to. The letter which Halliwell carried from Mr. Balshawe's overlooker was partly to throw dust into the jealous father's eyes, but was likewise to serve as a personal introduction to the stranger overlooker, who was prepared to receive him.

The young man certainly arranged this affair with much delicacy, and it was successful in its result. With as little of weariness and suffering as could be anticipated, and having obtained frequent "lifts" for his wife and the younger children, Halliwell arrived at the place of his destination. He did but wait to huddle his family into a small lodging, and to make himself "a bit decent," ere he waited on the overlooker of the mill to which he had been recommended. He was told to return again the next day, and work should be supplied him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HERO'S DILEMMA.

"If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs."

SHAKSPEARE.

"My child, the idol-treasure of my house."

SYMMONS.

"I HAVE but one tie to earth now, Frank, but one engrossing care. My darling child, Bianca, to you I must commit her."

"Safely," said Frank, with energy.

"Bless you," said the old man, feebly pressing his hand. "You will cherish her, I know."

"As a beloved sister," said Frank.

"Sister!" exclaimed Mr. Luttrell. "No, as your wife; as your wife."

Frank stood aghast.

"Do you mean, sir," said the invalid, raising himself on his elbow, "do you mean that you

have won my child's affections, merely to trifle with them."

"Indeed, sir, I never had the slightest thought of trifling with Bianca's affections, or of attempting to engage them; my own heart has for years been devoted to an English lady."

Mr. Luttrell sank back on his pillow, and at the same time a slight movement was heard in the adjoining apartment, the door leading to which was open. At a sign from the invalid, Frank went thither, but found no one. A few grapes were scattered on the ground near the further door, but there was no sign of occupation. He returned to Mr. Luttrell, and was shocked to see the excessive agitation under which he laboured. He spoke, however, brokenly.

"I have loved you, Mr. Walmsley, trusted you; I would loth believe you a villain. Oh, why have you thus deceived me?"

"On my honour as a gentleman, on my word as a Christian man," said Frank, "I have not wilfully deceived you."

"Then why conceal that you were going to be married?"

"Because I am not going to marry; I have no prospect of marriage. Had you ever chanced to put the question of an attachment to me I should not have denied it, but being so unfortunate as it is, I was hardly likely to introduce the subject."

"But why—why, with such a preoccupation of your thoughts, did you court the affections of Bianca? Answer that!" said he with a stern air.

"My dear Mr. Luttrell, my dear friend," said Frank, much agitated, "either you are strangely deceived, or I have strangely deceived myself; your kindness placed me at once on the footing of a son in your house, and as a brother to Bianca. I love her as a dear sister, and I thought I had treated her as one."

Mr. Luttrell looked at Frank as if he would search him through, but Frank stood the gaze unshrinkingly; the old gentleman buried his face in the bedclothes, though his young friend could distinctly hear a smothered groan.

At this moment a piercing shriek was heard, followed by vociferous calls for help, in the shrill and well-known tones of Caterina. Mr.

Luttrell started up, and Frank imploring him to remain quiet, that he would return instantly, rushed from the chamber.

Guided by Caterina's continued shrieks, he hastened towards a gallery, whither several terrified domestics were crowding, and was the first to reach Bianca's chamber-door. It was no moment for ceremony; he rushed in, and beheld the poor unfortunate girl on the bed, apparently dying, and Caterina supporting her. On the floor was a stiletto stained with blood. Medical assistance was instantly procured, the wound was dressed, and the poor girl restored to her senses. The first object her eyes opened upon was Frank, and her shrieks and exclamations were vehement. "Take him away!" she said, pointing to Frank; "Away, away, to his English lady: he has deceived me! Away with him, away!" and with such acclamations and frantic gestures she relapsed into insensibility. As soon as the colour was returning to her lips, the medical attendant counselled Frank to withdraw, which of course he did immediately, under some very ominous looks from the servants around, who idolized their young lady,

and were at no loss to interpret her expressions to him.

Poor Frank himself could hardly misinterpret them, and was painfully confirmed in his opinion on learning afterwards that she had taken from Caterina a dish of grapes for her grandfather, and went towards his apartment with them; that Caterina was surprised to see her return with the grapes quickly, dash them hastily on a table, and rush to her own chamber. (Doubtless, then, thought Frank, "it was she whom we heard retire from the antechamber.") Caterina added, that, alarmed by the Signora Bianca's manner, she had followed her, and had caught her arm just as she was about to strike herself a second blow with the stiletto.

With a heart as heavy as lead, Frank returned to Mr. Luttrell's bedside, who had already been informed by the surgeon of the catastrophe. The old gentleman opened his eyes at the noise of Frank's approach, but immediately closed them again, without any sign of recognition or notice; his face was cadaverously pale; death seemed to have made large strides in the last half hour; but none

of the benumbing oblivion of death had ensued. Every feature was wrung with anguish, and ever and anon a large tear stole from beneath the withered eyelid, and trickled slowly and unheeded down the pale and furrowed cheek. Time had not done his work there; all feeling, all sensibility was still alive.

Once a murmured word escaped him, but Frank could hardly catch its meaning; again, after a while, he murmured the same sound, and Frank caught its import—"Retribution." What could this mean? Ah! a subtle, an unsearchable thing is conscience; she may sleep; ay, for days and years, long years she may lie dormant, may sleep, may seem to be dead, annihilated; but not more surely does the green hue of spring succeed to the frost and snow of winter, than does the voice of conscience, *at some time*, thrill to the very heart.

Still these signs of anguish did not abate, still these desolating tears kept trickling down the pale cheek, and still, to Frank's alarmed imagination, the pale cheek grew paler; the cold hand colder. Distracted by horror, by grief, by self-accusation, he could bear it no

longer. Taking the cold and unresisting hand in both his, he pressed it fervently, and entreated Mr. Luttrell to hear him.

"My dear Mr. Luttrell! my dear, my honoured friend, listen to me; listen to me, I entreat you."

The sufferer opened his eyes, and fixed them on Frank with earnest attention.

"Bianca will recover, the surgeon believes that she will recover; give her, then, to me; forget what I have said, and give her to me as you proposed; I will cherish her in my very heart; I swear to you that I will."

Mr. Luttrell looked earnestly on Frank's speaking countenance, now glowing with energy and excited feeling, and sighed deeply. After a moment's space he shook his head, waved his hand as if to forbid further mention of the subject, and turned away.

But Frank, sincerely earnest in his purpose, and perhaps fearing his own stedfastness, would not be repelled. His lofty and chivalrous spirit dictated this sacrifice as merely a just atonement for the error into which his thoughtless conduct had betrayed others. Mr. Luttrell's situation was one of the most

deep and solemn interest; Bianca's orphaned position excited earnest pity and commiseration; and when to these circumstances was added the recent catastrophe, for which he almost felt himself accountable, it is no wonder that all selfish considerations were at once forgotten, and that even his tried affection for Miss Langshawe seemed at the moment of slight account. He pressed his petition on Mr. Luttrell; he even knelt down by his bedside and earnestly enforced it, calling heaven to witness his singleness of heart in the request, and his sincere purpose of devoting his life to Bianca's happiness.

It was some moments before Mr. Luttrell was able to reply, but he held Frank's hand, and pressed it fervently. When he did speak, however, it was only to express the most decided and unflinching negative, mingled with his full conviction of Frank's integrity of purpose, both heretofore and now. He blamed himself bitterly; he was, he said, the only person to blame. His own prudence had been laid asleep, his penetration blinded, and his poor, innocent child was the sufferer. He had heedlessly exposed her to a trial which he well

knew she was not calculated to withstand. The mischief was irretrievable, and his orphan girl must pay the penalty, for he would not commit palpable and obvious wrong on others by an action more certain even of an advantageous result to Bianca than a marriage to Walmsley, under present circumstances, could be. He would trust, fearlessly trust to Mr. Walmsley to act a brother's part by her; the rest he would leave to Heaven.

Such, broken and interrupted by weakness and agitation on the one part, and on the other by reiterated entreaties and protestations, was Mr. Luttrell's answer to Frank; and such was the continued tenor of the conversation until it was broken off by the peremptory command of the surgeon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HERO RESOLVED.

"Out of her favour, where I am in love."
SHAKSPEARE.

BUT for some days it appeared very doubtful whether the fair creature, on whose account so many anxious hearts were agitated, would ever recover from the blow which in a momentary impulse of ungovernable feeling she had aimed at her own existence. The wound in itself was not fatal, but on subsequent visits the surgeon's countenance exhibited an expression of anxiety which he had not betrayed in the first instance. In fact, though the wound in itself was innocuous, the fever and inflammation which the restless anxiety of the patient's mind and feelings induced, caused it soon to assume an alarming aspect. Added to this, there was not merely the immediate danger to

be apprehended, but that also which might result from such a shock on a fragile frame like Bianca's, constitutionally delicate, inherently consumptive. To this ruthless disease both her mother and grandmother had fallen victims ere they had seen twenty summers.

But the immediate danger was first to be surmounted, and it soon became so imminent as to cause the most intense anxiety. Mr. Luttrell bore the trial best, for his awful situation calmed and equalised his views; his anxiety was more for the present sufferings of his child than for their ultimate fatal issue: Caterina was miserable, but vociferously so: perhaps of the three, Walmsley was most to be pitied; his agony was intense, not the less so for any expression of it being resolutely subdued; and so unequivocally was misery painted on his countenance, that Caterina, who for some time after the occurrence had shunned him as she would a poisonous adder, and who had not hesitated to brand him as the cause of her child's misfortune, even she, on this memorable and miserable night came to him of her own accord from time to time with tidings of the sufferer. At length, about three

o'clock in the morning, she entered the room where he was keeping his solitary vigil, with a little, a very little of that wonted bustle and fidgetty consequence, which had of late been totally subdued.

"My son, our blessed Lady has had pity upon us. Bianca sleeps, and the doctor says it is a saving sign."

Utterly overcome, prostrated in mind and body by the various anxieties he had lately undergone, Walmsley gave way to his feelings: he laid his head on the old woman's shoulder and wept, Caterina threw her arms around him, as if indeed he were her son, and sobbed aloud; and never from that hour till he himself closed her eyes in a good old age, never for one moment did the faithful creature's affection and fidelity swerve from Walmsley.

In this state of feeling, it required little entreaty on his part to induce Caterina to take him to Bianca's chamber, and there, stealing softly to ber bed-side, he had the blessed assurance of sight that she was better. Her pulse was calm, her breathing quiet, her sweet countenance composed, and a gentle moisture had replaced the heretofore burning fever of

her skin. For many hours Walmsley kept his watch; nor could he be induced to move till the invalid evinced symptoms of awakening. What his self-communings were during that long and solemn night we know not, doubtless of a mingled hue, and it might be, nay, doubtless it was, of a melancholy tenor; but the result of his night's vigil was an unflinching determination to watch with a husband's faithful duty, and as far as might be, with a husband's love over the future welfare of the restored Bianca.

This determination was the effect of an inflexible sense of duty, furthered, it may be, by commiseration and gratitude, and not unmingled with melancholy self-regret. But his resolution was strengthened in a manner he looked not for.

The fair promise given of Bianca's recovery was not quenched: youth and nature fulfilled their gracious behests; and in a few days, pale and attenuated, but even more exquisitely lovely in her fragile seeming, more touchingly gentle in her subdued manner, she was carried on a portable couch to the side of her fast-sinking parent.

It was about this time that a letter from Mr. Ainsley, forwarded from Genoa, reached his nephew at Naples.

Frank read it with the attention which he always paid to the letters of an uncle whom he deeply loved and respected, but without any surpassing interest in the contents till he reached a paragraph, which stunned him with unexpected surprise, and, if the truth must be told, with dismay. It ran thus:—

"*I trust by this time you have conquered your ill-advised attachment, and that you will be prepared to learn, without useless regrets, that when this letter reaches you Miss Langshawe will have been sometime married to Mr. John Balshawe. The ceremony is to take place next Thursday at the Collegiate Church. Mr. Ashworth, from whose own lips I have my information, is invited to the ceremony.*"

Aghast, gasping almost for breath, Frank let fall the letter; but soon took it up again, in order to be sure he had read it aright. Yes, too truly so. His uncle was no retailer of gossiping reports at any time, and this information was too authentic to leave the sha-

dow of doubt on his mind. For awhile Frank gave himself up to feelings of unmitigated disappointment, mortification, and despair. It was some time before he called to mind the utter unreasonableness of this procedure; it was sometime before he reflected that he was about deliberately, most deliberately, to forfeit his faith to Miss Langshawe, and yet he reprobated a similar faithlessness on her part as a crime of the deepest dye. "Ah! but, then, my reasons," said Frank: "Heaven knows my heart has not broken its faith!" And might not Edith have reasons equally valid? No: in her cold clime and well-regulated sphere it was impossible, totally impossible.

So, with the self-deception which justified his own conduct, and yet could not even imagine a justification of Edith's, he suffered his angry feelings to supersede his sorrowful ones; and at length congratulated himself that Miss Langshawe's fickleness had made his course so easy with regard to Bianca. He *could* now have no after-regrets; all he had now to think of was to love Bianca as fervently as she deserved to be loved; and, in truth, it was no difficult matter. Indeed, national prejudice

apart,—which, after all, was a very narrow-minded thing, — the cold-blooded and fickle Edith could not compare to Bianca either in beauty or talent, or that energetic warmth of feeling which is such a lovely attribute of woman.

So in this cool, just, and discriminating mood, Walmsley adjourned to the sick chamber of his host. Bianca had just been carried in, and her couch was placed, as usual, by the side of her grandfather's bed, who was leaning over and feebly blessing her as Walmsley entered. He rushed to her side, and knelt down.

"Bless me, my friend and father! bless me also: for other father than you, other bride than Bianca, I will never have!"

This unwonted excitement of manner somewhat surprised the old man; and raising his eyes to Frank's face, the signs of ravaging agitation which he marked there added alarm to his surprise.

"What is the matter, Frank? what is the cause of this unwonted excitement? — pray speak!"

Frank perceived that he had been too abrupt,

and hastened to atone for his error by an unvarnished statement of facts.

"My kind friend, when I urged you to permit me to marry Bianca, if I could gain her consent, you peremptorily refused me; but not, as I hope and believe, from feelings of my unworthiness,—"

"No, certainly not."

"But from the opinion that Bianca's happiness might be endangered from my predilection for another lady."

"Well."

"That predilection is at an end. That lady is married."

"Is it so?"

"It is, sir, it is indeed so. I have received unquestionable tidings, which I will communicate to you in full hereafter. But, at present, say—only say that I have your permission to plead my cause to Bianca."

Mr. Luttrell did not speak; and Walmsley knelt by Bianca's couch, and gently drawing one fair hand away from her face, which was bathed in tears, he pressed it to his lips.

"Bianca, love! dearest!—dearest Bianca! listen to me! I am not worthy of you; I do

not profess to be so. I have loved, and trusted, and been deceived. I cannot offer you a first affection; but I do offer you a true and grateful and loving heart. I do truly and earnestly look to your affection, Bianca, as a solace for all my past sorrows, a refuge from all future troubles. Say, Bianca, say, dearest! that you do not reject me!"

What Bianca's answer might have been had she been left during the progress of her convalescence to unbroken intercourse with her own bitter thoughts, we cannot say. But Walmsley had had a most powerful and efficient coadjutor in Caterina, who, as if to atone for her former injustice to him, had never wearied in reiterating to Bianca's greedy ear her details of his sufferings, anxiety, and watchfulness during her illness. Bianca's own heart, too, however opposed by her pride. was no inefficient supporter of her nurse's representations. Supported now on that kind nurse's shoulder, she did not speak, she did not look; but the tears rained faster and faster down her pale face, and the hand which remained clasped in Walmsley's feebly, but perceptibly, returned his pressure.

Mr. Luttrell looked at them earnestly for a moment or two, and then, raising his hands, said, in tones low indeed, but almost startling from their solemn earnestness—

"Bless you — bless you both, my children!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE LOVER'S REVENGE.

"Such men are dangerous."

Disheartening and sad as the condition of Nancy Halliwell's family might seem, and as indeed it was, in a strange town, among strange people, in a confined and unsettled home, and with all the discomforts and nuisances appertaining to the poorest and dirtiest part of a dense manufacturing city, in lieu of the open and wholesome, though humble abode, the clear air and blue sky of the home they had left, the familiar flowers, the sunny garden-plot, and the old trees of the meadow, with whose every branch they had a lifetime's acquaintance,—depressing as this situation was—and that it was depressing the fast-fading bloom on the countenances of Mrs. Halliwell and her children testified,—yet was it happy in comparison of the lot which the misguided girl's

conduct had brought on her early lover, Jem Forshawe.

One of the most extraordinary and, to strangers, one of the most incomprehensible excrescences appended to the general system of the the cotton manufactures is, the formation, organization, and far-extending power of "The Union." True it is that most other trades have their Unions, or Associations, or Brotherhoods, so called, for the protection of the operative or mechanic; but the Union of the cotton-spinners has been, and, for aught we know, may still be, of infinitely more power or importance than any other in the kingdom: they have absolutely passed laws, levied contributions, and published their proceedings at their annual or half-yearly meetings, or "parliaments," with as much formality as the supreme legislative assembly of the kingdom could have assumed. And their power over an immense portion of the manufacturing population has been enormous and *fearful.* And though the spinners themselves do not, in fact, form a greater proportion than one-tenth of the whole mass employed in cotton mills, still is their labour so absolutely necessary to the working of these

establishments that they do in fact control the whole: and if they refuse to work themselves, it follows, necessarily, that the remaining nine-tenths of the manufacturing population are thrown out of work also.

It would be in contradiction to all experience of human nature to suppose that the immense power which these operatives thus, according to the necessity of things have, and which power is multiplied to the nth by their regular organization, and the laws of their "Union,"—it were absurd to suppose that this power is never exerted *except* for the protection of the operative from an oppressive or illiberal master. Far otherwise, indeed, is the fact. Men, master manufacturers, excellent in themselves, and beneficent and liberal masters, have been reduced to the very verge of ruin by the "turn outs," which the Spinners' Union has ordered. Readers who have not happened to reside in the "Manufacturing Districts," may be surprised to learn that, on an intimation from the leaders of the "Spinners' Union," who may have some cause, real or imaginary, of dissatisfaction with some of the masters, "all hands" will strike: that is to say, every

workman, of whatever description, employed in or about the delinquent factories, will, on a certain appointed day, at a certain appointed hour, leave off working, and neither threats nor entreaties on the part of their masters can induce them to do a hand's-turn till the oracles of the Union permit them to work again. Picquets, regular soldierlike picquets, are set to watch the condemned mills; and if any well-disposed men venture still to their work, *they do it at the risk of their lives.* Hundreds and thousands of men have turned out often, not because they had the slightest cause of dissatisfaction themselves, but because it was the will of the Union.* These Unions are sys-

* Mr. Chappel, a Manchester manufacturer, stated in evidence before the Factory Commission, that in October, 1830, the whole of his spinners, whose average wages were 2*l.* 13*s.* 5*d.* weekly, turned out at the instigation of the delegates of the Union. That his men declared they had no fault to find with wages, work, or master; but that the Union insisted on their "striking."

These delegates waited on this gentleman to dictate conditions, without which, they said, neither his own spinners, *nor any others*, should work for him again. These modest conditions were,—that the men should have a considerable increase of wages; that they should not be fined

tematically supported from month to month, from year to year, by the weekly, rigidly exacted contributions of the members; therefore they have generally a standing fund from which to support those operatives who "turn out" at their bidding. During one "strike," (for so these turn-outs are called,) within the small circumference of a circle of scarcely three miles in diameter, not less than from thirty to forty thousand souls—men, women, and children—husbands and mothers, brothers and sisters, abandoned their employment, and by that act threw out of weekly circulation something like fifteen thousand pounds; and forced into the same vessel as themselves, and compelled as allies, the shopkeepers and tradespeople of every class who depended on their custom for subsistence. To every member of this immense multitude who had subscribed to the "Union," that Union declared it would pay ten shillings weekly: and, for a time, it fulfilled its promise.

for bad work, or for not conforming to the general regulations of the mill.

These conditions being declined, watches were set on every avenue to the mill, and for many weeks all workmen were effectually prevented from entering.

Thus, while the orators of the political clubs and the scribes of the Radical newspaper press were declaiming on the slavery and the long-protracted toil of the factory operative—whilst ill-judging "philanthropists" were sighing over the much-exaggerated sorrows of the manufacturing labourers, these same people were not only devoting the night-hours, which, it might be imagined, with "slaves, o'erworn with toil," were best and naturally given to the pillow,—to midnight meetings of committees and delegates, but they were absolutely giving weekly, systematically, and readily, a considerable portion of the money "wrung from their sinews" to support all the arrangements of a "Trade's Union," with its liberally-stipended secretaries, delegates, and treasurers, and rout of inferior officers.

Though these turn-outs were generally begun with peaceable professions, and an expressed desire only to obtain the redress of some specified "grievance," they often ended in riot, tumult, and insubordination of the most extreme kind. Immense multitudes would assemble, riots would ensue, factories would be burned to the ground; the windows of private

houses (of those connected, or *supposed to be*, with obnoxious cotton-men) would be shattered; those gentlemen, how inoffensive or estimable soever, or their families, dare not appear abroad, or if they did it was in danger of life and limb. Civil power being totally unavailing to quell these demonstrations, military force would necessarily be called in, and bloodshed and misery would ensue.*

There has been murder,—not hasty slaying in hot blood, but cool, deliberate, well-"proven" murder, committed at the behest of the leaders of the "Spinners' Union."

For such deeds, which they hesitated not, for certain purposes, coolly to contemplate, fitting instruments were required. The multi-

* This picture is not in one iota exaggerated—rather otherwise. I and mine are totally "innocent of cotton;" I have not, I never had, a relative connected with the manufacture. Yet has it been my lot more than once to see my father, a man of unimpeachable honour and of great humanity, go out when my mother has been all but hopeless of his safe return; and I remember frequently the whole front of our house being shuttered and barricadoed, and soldiers or policemen quartered in the hall, whilst we were huddled for safety in the breakfast-room at the back of the house. This was during the tumults and riots consequent on different "strikes."

tude of the Unionists were honest well-disposed men; and though, by the laws of the association, they swore to perform whatever their leaders might require of them, yet were those leaders far too shrewd to give the food of strong men to babes. But the secret rulers and delegates of this body, scattered through the mass of the population, (just as even now one trembles to think the "familiars" of the Inquisition once were,) were always on the watch for tools suited to their purpose, and often showed no inconsiderable degree of shrewdness in selecting them. Jem Forshawe had long been a marked man with them, for the very imbecility of mind which his countenance indicated rendered him a fit subject on whom to work.

Jem Forshawe, happy in his humble station, content with his wages, blessed with his Nancy, was impenetrable to their efforts. "Th' Union might be well enough for other folk, but he wanted nought, not he."

But, unhappily for Jem Forshawe, a notable instrument of the Union met him, as if commissioned by the Evil One himself, on the very night when, burning with agony and rage,

he had flung the money, which was meant to be the reward of his shame, in the teeth of the base seducer.

In such a mood, Forshawe was easily worked upon, and his tempter had craft enough to make the most of his opportunity. Intimations of revenge, of chastisement on the selfish ruinator of his happiness and Nancy's honour, were greedily listened to by the excited wretch. Nay, his wily seducer did not content himself with general invectives on lustful and arbitrary masters, but he pointed at an especial vengeance which was to be directed against Mr. John Balshawe; a vengeance, by the way, which was but the coinage of his own brain at the moment of need.

However, the purpose was answered; the tool, or brother, or instrument, or victim, as the case might be, was won, and agreed to take the vows of the Union. His zeal was not suffered to cool; his wrongs and grievances were kept vividly before him; his own vengeance on the thoughtless author of his ruin and misery was painted to him in vivid and varied colouring, and his mind and fancy were kept in a state of perpetual excitement

till the time arrived on which he was to be admitted a member of this all-potential Union.

The time was, this evening.

At the appointed hour, a little after dusk, Forshawe was in waiting near a certain tavern in Manchester, where his guide and friend soon joined him. They immediately repaired to the tavern, but did not go in at the public entrance, but by a remote and sequestered side-door. The guide, who seemed well acquainted with all the localities, led Forshawe through diverse passages, up one staircase and down another, till it was apparent that they had quitted the house which they originally entered. He stopped at length in a large room, and told his friend to sit down there and wait for him: he then went out, locking the door after him, and did not return for more than an hour, during which Forshawe was alone, and in the dark, for by this time the night was advanced.

At length he returned, and two other persons with him, and they proceeded to bandage Forshawe's eyes; he would have remonstrated, but was silenced immediately by being told it was a usual and necessary rule: being completely

blindfolded, his arm was taken by a person on each side, and they moved forward: if he felt any throbbing then, it was appeased by the well-known voice of one of his captors (his guide), who told him that he would remain with him to the end. He was led, as it appeared to him, through innumerable passages, and up and down stairs, till at length they made a dead pause. He felt his friend quit his arm, and directly he heard three low and solemn knocks on what he rightly supposed to be a door close to them.

"Who comes," said a grave and sonorous voice from within, "who comes to interrupt us in our solemn deliberations?"

Forshawe's guide answered:

"I am a brother of the Order, and I bring a stranger, who humbly craves to be admitted of our fraternity."

"Enter, in the name of the Lord."

Forshawe heard a door open, and both his arms again being seized, he was firmly though gently drawn forward: his heart thrilled as he felt his footing give way beneath him, and could not hear the sound of a tread, either of

his own or his guides.* He was borne forward on this soft and yielding ground for several yards: then his conductors stood still, and so, perforce, did he.

The most intense silence prevailed; not a sound was heard save the breathing of, as he supposed, several people around. At last, without any audible sign—any other of course being lost on him—this silence was at once broken by the subdued, but thrilling tones of a hymn of several verses, which was chaunted slowly and solemnly throughout.

Then, in a deep and low tone, some one repeated the following verses of the ninety-fourth Psalm, several voices responding "Amen" at the end of each verse. It must be observed, however, that though every word was given with perfect distinctness, the pro-

* Every possible precaution for silence and secrecy was adopted in the rooms where these meetings were held. They had double doors; every minute chink or crevice in the window-shutters (which were always closed) and walls was plastered up: sometimes the walls themselves were hung round with stuff, to deaden the sounds of what went on within, and the floors were thickly laid with saw-dust.

ceedings throughout were conducted in a subdued and whispering tone.*

"O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; thou God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

"Arise, thou Judge of the world: and reward the proud after their deserving.

"Lord, how long shall the ungodly, how long shall the ungodly triumph?

"How long shall all wicked doers speak so disdainfully: and make such proud boasting?

"They smite down thy people, O Lord: and trouble thine heritage.

"Who shall rise up with us against the wicked? or who will take our part against the evil-doers?

"God shall recompense them their wickedness, and destroy them in their own malice: yea, the Lord our God shall destroy them."

There was then another considerable pause, an apparently motionless silence, which Forshawe dared not attempt to break. He was already much alarmed; but it was an unfailing rule of this inquisition to excite alarm, so that a member should not dare to break his oath; indeed, it was no secret that their own lives

* The use of Scripture language in some of these impious assemblies was frequent: and the ninety-fourth Psalm was especially used by them.

were in jeopardy if they did. He was suddenly startled by the sound of his own name, in a low sepulchral tone:

"James Forshawe, hear me, and mark me well. You are now within our secret walls, and now and hereafter in our power. Should you betray our secrets you will have cause to rue this day; but if you are faithful to your trust, your well-doing shall be heedfully attended to, your wrongs shall be amply avenged. I must now know whether you can keep a secret?"

"Yes; I can."

"And will you do so?"

"I will."

"Then shall you be admitted of our fellowship, and be at once to us as a brother. But shouldst thou prove deceitful, remember thy end—for it will be a fearful warning."

Several voices then slowly chaunted:

"Vengeance shall slay the deceitful man,
And a pit shall be digged for him who sweareth a lie."

He was then desired, in a whisper, to kneel down, his hands were clasped and held up, and he was told to keep them in that position, and the oath was administered, he repeating

each clause after the person who slowly recited it to him.

It was as follows:

"I, James Forshawe, do voluntarily swear, in the awful presence of Almighty God, and before these witnesses, that I will execute, with zeal and alacrity, as far as in me lies, every task or injunction which the majority of my brethren shall impose upon me, in furtherance of our common welfare; as the chastisement of knobs, the ASSASSINATION *of oppressive or tyrannical masters*, or the demolition of shops, that shall be deemed incorrigible; and also that I will cheerfully contribute to the support of such of my brethren as shall lose their work in consequence of their exertions against tyranny, or renounce it in resistance to a reduction of wages. And I do further swear, that I will never divulge this my most solemn obligation; and if ever I do reveal it, may what is now before me plunge my soul into the everlasting pit of misery."

"Rise, James Forshawe, and see how thou hast bound thyself."

He was raised up, and in the same instant

the bandage was lifted from his eyes. He started back in horror.

Right facing him, almost touching him, the hideous skull grinning on him, the fleshless arms stretched forward as if to clutch him, was the skeleton of a man. Close by was a small table, bearing a Bible, a drawn sword, and an axe. From the position of this table, his hands must have been on the Bible when he took the oath.

He glanced fearfully round. In the shadowy gloom, rather than light, which the dim lamp cast over the chamber, he saw forms flitting about, all robed in white.

The chief inquisitor (so to speak), raising his hand towards the skeleton, began some dirge-like rhymes, but ceased suddenly. Forshawe had sunk on the floor in a fit.

He was quickly removed, and the friend who had beguiled him there saw him laid in bed, and hoped that the morning would restore him. This hope proved futile; the poor fellow's nervous system had received too great a shock. Incipient fever too, the result of intense anxiety and want of rest and food, had been for some

days silently working its insidious way on his always feeble frame. In a few days Forshawe was taken from his bed, and carried in a coach to the asylum for such miserables—an incuble lunatic.*

* In the foregoing sketch of the administration of the oath to a Unionist I have *invented* nothing; and th e effect of it on Forshawe had a precedent in a man of much stronger mind than my poor operative, who died raving mad in consequence of the shock he received on his inauguration into a Trade Union. For corroboration of this, and other circumstances, and assertions of the foregoing chapter, see "Character, Object, and Effects of Trades' Unions." London: Ridgway. 1823.

CHAPTER XVI.

WEDDING AND DEATH.

"This looks not like a nuptial."

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. LUTTRELL worsened apace, and it soon became evident to all around him that nature was nearly exhausted, that his course was nearly run. It now became evident that if his last wish was to be fulfilled in Bianca's marriage, the ceremony must not be much longer delayed, and the requisite preparations were accordingly made. The English ambassador at Naples, who had all along evinced the deepest interest and commiseration for this afflicted family, promised his sanction at Mr. Luttrell's own residence that evening, where his lordship's chaplain was to perform the ceremony: and the commiserating and excellent ambassadress volunteered her own presence as a support and sanction to Bianca. Frank hardly knew how to express his gra-

titude for the most considerate and generous attention he received.

Mr. Luttrell too appeared most thankful and relieved when these various arrangements were detailed to him.

"And now, Frank," said he, "there is one, only one thing remains to be done: I must write a letter. Give me paper, pen, and ink; prop me up rather more firmly with these pillows, and leave me."

Frank was shocked, for even then the approaches of death were evident, and he feared the exertion might hasten his friend's last moments. But all his entreaties were unavailing; and having supplied Mr. Luttrell with what he asked for, he sought the surgeon, in hope that his remonstrances might have more effect. This gentleman found Mr. Luttrell in a fearful state of agitation, and at once put his veto peremptorily on his pursuing the exciting occupation which he had commenced. But he recalled his own prohibition.

"Doctor," said the dying man, "I know your remonstrance is meant in kindness, and in kindness I take it, but I cannot obey you. This letter must be written; it is an act of

atonement, and if it be not completed, my last moments will not be in peace."

The humane and intelligent surgeon acquiesced at once, only intreating his patient to forbear for a short space, until he had prepared a composing draught, which would, he trusted, render him better able to complete his task. This advice was too grateful not to be thankfully accepted.

It was near two hours after—hours passed by his friends in the most intense anxiety—ere Mr. Luttrell touched the little silver bell which was placed on his pillow. Walmsley, Bianca, and Caterina were all waiting and listening without, and instantly obeyed the summons. Mr. Luttrell appeared almost fainting, but was revived by a cordial which Caterina administered. He then intimated a wish to be left alone with Frank.

"Not me, my father?" said Bianca, who had raised herself on the bed, and was leaning over him with looks of agonised affection. "Do not send your child away!"

"My child will leave me for a few minutes," said he, "and then she shall quit me no more till she has closed my eyes."

Silently and fearfully Bianca withdrew.

Mr. Luttrell pointed to the letter which he had written, and made signs for Frank to seal it, selecting himself a particular seal for the purpose. He then regarded the letter earnestly for a moment, and placed it with some solemnity in Frank's hand.

"Frank, my son, my friend, I commit this letter to your charge: if the lady for whom it is destined be alive—and she was living a few months back—I trust to you, to you yourself, Frank, to deliver it to her wherever she may be. Do you promise?"

"I do, sir, solemnly."

Mr. Luttrell pressed his hand, while a gleam of satisfaction passed over his features. Frank looked at the superscription of the letter: he could hardly believe his eyes:—

"*Mrs. Frances Halling,*
"*late of Winley Manor,*
"*Hampshire.*"

"Why, this lady, this lady, sir, is a near neighbour and friend of my uncle, in Lancashire!"

"No, Frank, no," said Mr. Luttrell, somewhat agitated. "I pray you be careful: the

the lady I refer to has resided for a lifetime at the other end of the kingdom. There may be many Hallings."

"Doubtless, sir, there may: but the lady I mean is Mrs. Frances Halling, who has lived with her brother on the ancient family estate of Winley Manor, in Hampshire. On the estate passing into other hands, she and her nephew, a sister's son, Mr. Philip Ashworth resided together, and are now settled in Lancashire, a few miles from Manchester. Surely this is the same?"

"The same, the very same; I have no farther doubt. And this lady, you know her? Frank."

"Intimately, sir."

"And esteem her?"

"She is esteemed and loved by all who know her."

"No doubt, no doubt; she is sure to be so; it could not be otherwise. And, my child, then, my gifted but inexperienced Bianca, will have the society of this lady without removing you from your relations and your home?"

"She will certainly."

"I am thankful, I am very very thankful.

This information brings a blessing with it even to my last moments. You wonder, Frank; but you will know all in time. And now bring the dear child to me; I would not lose sight of her again."

The day was now far advanced, and the hour at hand which had been appointed for Frank's marriage. The ceremony was quietly and quickly performed, and Frank knelt, with his weeping and heartbroken bride, at the bed-side of their dying parent.

About two hours after Mr. Luttrell expired.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN INTERFERENCE.

"And they had fixed the wedding day,
The morning that must wed them both."

"And, while I gazed, there came to me a thought
That I might step beyond my natural race."

WORDSWORTH.

HEAVILY, notwithstanding their apparent gaiety, had sped the days and hours of the festival to the unhappy Edith. Firm, however, stedfastly firm in her purpose, her outward bearing had given little token of the conflict within; she had chatted, danced, sung, with apparently as much gaiety as other revellers, and, in the general bustle of the time, there were not to observe so closely as to discover that her gaiety was somewhat forced, her colour feverish. The only friend in her confidence, Mrs. Frances Halling, was away: she had chosen this bustling period to pay a visit

to a friend in Hampshire, and it might be, probably would be, many weeks before she returned.

How often during the bustle and hurry of gaiety had Edith wished that the unwonted excitement was over, and that she could return to the privacy and retiredness of their accustomed life. It was so hard, she thought, to assume the appearance of hilarity and gaiety; and for this, except in a crowd, there would be no need; her father and mother would not expect her to be gay, and a character of quiet cheerfulness she could easily support. Poor Edith! she found the latter task infinitely more difficult than the former. Her mother's caresses, her father's kindness, almost broke her heart; she was a thousand times on the very point of betraying her misery, and she almost rejoiced that the time, the long-dreaded time, was arrived. She could hardly be more miserable than she was now, and at least her father would not see it.

Still so accomplished in artifice had her devoted affection for her father made her, that even he, closely as he watched her, did not detect in her deep depression anything beyond

what one so thoughtful and affectionate as Edith might naturally be expected to feel on leaving for ever the happy home of her childhood.

So the sacrifice progressed to its accomplishment, and the day of the wedding was at hand.

The bride was sitting sad and solitary in her dressing-room, which looked out on her own especial flower-garden, when her maid entered, and told her that William Bladow begged to be allowed to see her. Without thought, she gave orders to admit him, and the maid retired for the purpose, when suddenly she called to mind the conversation she had had with him some months before, and the warning he had given her against Mr. John Balshawe, now her affianced husband. Struck with undefinable apprehension, she rang the bell hastily, to countermand her previous permission, and to say that she was engaged, and could not be disturbed; but she was too late: Susan even now opened the door, accompanied by the hermit.

As retreat was now impossible, Edith nerved herself to the interview; and kindly welcoming her humble friend, forced him to take the

chair, which he, from diffidence, would have declined.

"It is a long time since I have seen you, Bladow."

"Yes, ma'am; I have been out several weeks, and returned but yesterday."

"So I understand; you take a long ramble every summer, do you not?"

"I have mostly done so, Miss Langshawe; and though it were foolish, I could not help wishing to rove once again among my native hills before I die. I have been into Yorkshire."

"I hope, Bladow, you will live to have yet many a ramble amongst them; but you seem not well, and your spirits are depressed in consequence."

"I am not well, but I am as well as I shall ever be again on this earth; I have taken my last ramble, I *know*. As to spirits, Miss Langshawe, it's not my own illness that depresses me, but the crime and the misery I see everywhere about me."

"My good friend, I will not have you croak thus. There is, I do hope and believe, a great deal of goodness and a great deal of happiness in the world."

"I dare say there is; it were a sin to doubt it, so long as even the shadow of God's finger is seen in it; but, oh, there is sin, and crime, and misery,—misery so sad, so deep; and what causes it, Miss Langshawe—what induces to crime? and what leads to misery?—Money. What makes a man overreach his neighbour?—Money. What tempts him to murder a fellow-creature? —Money. What shuts his heart to affection, and his ears to every cry of virtue and honour? —Money. What makes a father sacrifice his child at the altar?—Money—money—money."

He was terribly excited, and he spoke with such vehemence, and his light eyes glared so, that Miss Langshawe feared he was what he was so often called—mad. Her first impulse was to ring for attendance, but she checked the feeling, prudently keeping, however, within reach of the bell. But the paroxysm had passed off with the sudden feeling that gave rise to it. He was now again quite calm and respectful. He spoke abruptly, however, so abruptly that Edith's cheeks glowed at his sudden remark.

"You are going to be married, Miss Langshawe?"

"Yes, immediately, and I expect you will not be long before you come to see me at Hensley Lodge, where I am to live. There is a beautiful garden there, Bladow."

He looked earnestly at her, and shook his head slowly, muttering to himself as he did so, "Poor thing, poor thing!" This, however, Edith did not hear; she was, in fact, very busy with something on the table.

"No, Miss Edith, I shall never come there."

"Why not, Bladow? you allow your spirits to sink too much; you will be better in a little time; you have over-fatigued yourself in your late journey."

"No, ma'am, it was not my weakness I was thinking of, but it 's ill travelling to see a sorrowing heart; and that, I fear me, I should see at Hensley Lodge.

Edith snipped her ribbon the wrong way, and almost snipped off the end of her finger with it. For a minute or two a choking in her throat kept her silent; but she had acquired some facility in subduing emotions, and she conquered this. We have all felt, at times, that to speak in an angry tone is a good recipe

to hide or drive back the starting tears; and it was this feeling which now inbued her tone with a degree of haughty anger, which she was, in fact, far from feeling towards her injudicious but faithful friend.

"Is there anything you wish or want which I can do for you, Bladow? If so, name it; my time at present is much occupied."

"Yes, Miss Langshawe," said he, evidently deeply hurt by her tone; "there is one thing you can do for me, one thing, for which I would willingly take another weary journey, though it should lay me in my grave,—and that is, to speak one word of truth to an old man who loves you as if you were a child of his own.

"Miss Langshawe, when you were a crowing baby I 've dandled you in my arms scores o' times, and ye were always gleg to get to me; when ye were a todlin' girl I've carried you for hours together, seeking flowers and bird-nests for you; and when ye went to the fine boarding school, your own father did not count the weeks to holiday-time as I did; and I 've rejoiced Miss Langshawe in your father's luck as if it was my own,—for your sake. Now, Miss Langshawe, for my

deep and enduring love for you from your cradle until now, I entreat you to tell me one thing"—

Edith, whose assumed firmness had all vanished during this address, raised her pale face bathed in tears, to him—

"Tell me, Miss Edith, do you marry Mr. John Balshawe with your own free consent?"

In a few moments Edith replied firmly, "Yes, Bladow, I do marry him with my own consent; and now, my good old friend, leave me; you see I am not very well."

She held out her hand to him; he bowed respectfully and was gone in an instant.

Below, the servants, who knew well what a favourite he was with their young mistress, wanted to detain him to take some refreshment, but he did but call in the kitchen for his slouched hat and long stick, which he had left there, and went away at once down the narrow footpath in the back shrubbery.

There he met with Susan, coming in great haste; but his own mood had changed, and he stopped her.

"Good morning! William," said she, passing on.

"Nay, stop Susan, stay a minute; I want to speak to you."

"I can't stop; my mistress does not know I 'm out. I only ran for this sewing silk for the work-women, and they 're waiting for it."

"And will the wedding wait if the silk don't arrive?"

"Law! how you talk, as if the wedding would wait for a halfpenny skein of silk."

"D'ye think Miss Edith would be sorry if the wedding was put off."

"Law! as if anybody would not be sorry to have their wedding put off."

"You would, I dare say Susan. But, to my view, Miss Langshawe does not seem very gleesome about this wedding."

"So say I, Master Bladow, and so say the others: but Robert, our footman, who 's lived all among the real great folks in London, says, that it 's quite right, for that it 's very vulgar to show you 're very glad about anything."

"And I suppose, then, it 's quite right that the poor young lady should look so pale and ill."

"Oh, as to that, she 's looked ill ever since young Mr. Walmsley left."

"And why did Mr. Walmsley leave, Susan?"

"Oh, of course I dont know; but people do say that Mr. Walmsley had not money enough for old master, and that was the reason; and Mr. John Balshawe's own man—he's a very civil young man—told me, that his master had lent our old master a power o' money."

"And that's the cause of this wedding?"

"Nay, how should I know that; but I'm glad, anyhow, that my young mistress is showing Mr. Walmsley as free a spirit as his own. Only to think of him!"

"Of what?"

"Why, of his going to be married abroad, while my mistress that loved him so, was single at home."

"Married! Mr. Walmsley married! Who is he to be married to?"

"Oh, I don't know; some foreign madam, at Turkey or Rome, with a sight of money."

"A sight of money! Does he marry her for money?"

"Why, of course he does. What else should he marry her for, when he had plighted troth with my young lady, as I heard 'em both

with my own ears, when old Master came in a passion and parted 'em. But I must not chatter here, I must go," and Susan pushed on.

"Yes, go," said the hermit to himself; "go; you have chattered enough. So, pledged to Mr. Walmsley! I did not know that — and he had not money enough, she says — well, like enough, like enough, it 's like enough to be true;—and this John Balshawe, this bridegroom, has, she says, lent him money—lent her father money — ay, that 's it—there have been rumours of embarrassment lately—that 's it—and the young lady 's sold.

"Did not I see this?" continued he, as he maundered home his solitary way — "Did I not foresee this, and warn her? Ay, and she denied it then flatly, and said she could never think of it: and now she says it is by her own consent; — pooh! pooh!— a consenting heart never wore such a countenance as that.

"She may have consented; she may have consented, certainly; but has she been fairly and openly dealt by?—I doubt—I doubt;—would a willing heart have spoken of a new flower-garden instead of a new husband? Ah! —I doubt."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MARRIAGE MORNING.

"When thy foot is at the altar, when the ring hath press'd thine hand,
When those thou lov'st, and those that love thee, weeping round thee stand,
Oh! may the rhyme that friendship weaves, like a spirit of the air,
Be o'er thee in that moment for a blessing and a prayer."

On the morning appointed for Edith's marriage, three or four carriages drove up to that gate of the Collegiate Church in Manchester which opens on to Hunts Bank. Nothing seems to fly with more certainty among the mobility of the neighbourhood there than news of a wedding, and long before the "favour" of the first postilion was seen, as he laboured up the (then) frightful hill, a large crowd was assembled at the gate to greet the appearance of the bride. The first carriage was permitted to deposit its freight of blue-coated gentlemen,

and white-bonneted ladies without any very earnest comments: so likewise was the second. When the door of the third was opened, the crowd pressed eagerly forwards, and "That 's he! that 's him!" was whispered on all sides, as a gaily-dressed, genteel-looking young man handed a white-robed lady from the carriage.

"And is that the bride?" asked one uninitiated in the routine of "grandee" weddings.

"That the bride! you sawney! no; the bride don't *come* with the bridegroom, she 'll *return* with him."

But now the fourth carriage was opened, and an elderly gentleman alighted, and with the most extreme and gentle tenderness assisted, or, as it seemed to be, almost lifted out a lady, closely veiled. But the wind is no respecter of persons, and it blew aside the veil, —and the crowd pressed forward, and saw a face, a beautiful face, but so pale! Alas! so pale!

"Poor thing!" said an old woman, as she turned away from the crowd.

"Nay, mother, you 're not going yet?"

"Yea, but I am. I 'se not stop to see *her* again. Poor thing! poor thing!"

So the party proceeded to the church, and the necessary preliminaries being quickly adjusted, Mr. John Balshawe took the hand of his fair bride to lead her to the altar. Her bridesmaid, Harriet Wolstenholme, followed with the bridegroom's friend; Mr. Langshawe and Mr. Ashworth came next, and the other assembled friends followed in due course, and all were quickly arranged round the altar.

None stopped then, to admire this truly magnificent chancel, with its oaken stalls and skreens of elaborate and exquisite carving, now blackened with the breath, the holy breath of centuries passed away; its lofty pinnacles, its magnificent arches, its groined roof, its many-hued window: these, its "ancient proprieties," still remain here: this beautiful chancel has been repaired, not "improved." But of little account were all these matters now; a deeper, a *living* interest enchained all eyes, all hearts.

The Service commenced; and shortly, very shortly the clergyman, in whose ministering hands this holy Service lost none of its solemnity, began his impressive adjuration.

"*I require and charge you both, (as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when*

the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed,) that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it."

During the reading of this, Edith raised her head, and apparently stung by some inward feeling, cast on her father one glance, one short momentary glance of utter misery. Her father saw it not, nor any one else but Mr. Ashworth, but his usually ruddy face became absolute mahogany-colour with the feeling that rushed through his nerves. That one look had told him a whole history, and he looked fearfully at her; but her head had again sunk, her eyes were fixed on the pavement.

"*For be ye well assured,*" continued the clergyman, "*that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's word doth allow are not joined together by God; neither is their matrimony lawful.*"

"Nor is this lawful; I forbid it," said a feeble voice, as if from the tombs.

Everybody started and turned; Mr. Langshawe's first thought was to throw his arm round his daughter, and then he too turned.

From a side aisle, near the Derby chapel,

the hermit, William Bladow, was coming slowly towards the altar. His slouched and feathered hat, his strange dress, and long silvery beard, with the unsettled gleam of his eye, made him look like a maniac; while, from his pale and cadaverous countenance, he might have risen from the tomb. He moved and spoke as if in the extremity of weakness.

"I thank God!" said he, removing his hat, and looking reverently upward; "I thank Thee, that Thou hast heard me, and that I am in time!"

"Reverend sir," said he, turning to the clergyman, "I have travelled day and night, in sickness and pain to be here in time. I forbid this marriage; according to your own showing, it can not come to good, for they are *not* 'coupled together according to God's word.'"

"Sir," said Mr. Langshawe (who had now recovered his presence of mind) to the clergyman, "I know this person well; he is well-disposed and harmless; but, as you may guess, not quite himself; I pray you to proceed with the Service."

"Impossible, sir," said the clergyman: "I

regret the interruption as much as you do, and I have no doubt it will prove a merely frivolous one, yet I am bound to hear what he has to say."

Mr. Langshawe bowed, and drew his trembling daughter a little apart, still keeping his arm round her. Her fair friends threw up her veil, untied her bonnet, gave her a vinaigrette, and did all that was proper and becoming on such an occasion, totally unheeded by her. She did not faint; the agony of her suspense was too great for that relief.

In the meanwhile Bladow had conjured the clergyman in few but energetic words, to wait a few moments; he had, he said, run before his companion to save time, but that companion was even now in the churchyard, and would be in the church instantly.

He went towards the small door by the Derby Chapel, and apparently met with her there, for in an instant he returned, leading by the hand—Nancy Halliwell.

"Nancy!" exclaimed the bridegroom, in tones of unequivocal and irrepressible rage.

"Nancy!" exclaimed Mr. Langshawe, in tones of the most extreme astonishment.

Nancy, no longer gay, rosy, bonny, neat, and happy, but pale, tearful, slovenly, with dishevelled hair, and unsightly figure, looked from one to the other, and then bursting into tears, fell on her knees before Mr. Langshawe, and begged him to forgive her; that she had come against her will, and was far from wishing to interfere with her cousin's happiness.

"Get up, Nancy," said Edith, who, though shaking so, that she was obliged to hold by the rails of the altar, yet seemed as composed as any of the party; "get up, my father is not angry with you."

"What is this; what is it all about?" said Mr. Langshawe *very* angrily.

"I'll tell you, sir," said the hermit, "and then you can judge fairly whether you will sell your daughter to Mammon. Miss Edith told me she married with her own consent; but I'd my own doubts about that; at least, I thought she didn't know all the truth. Here's Nance Halliwell, sir, your wife's cousin, her own flesh and blood, has been deceived by this man under a promise of marriage, and that too even at the very time he was courting your own daughter. No one in this wide world, sir, thinks

higher of your fair daughter than I do; but I say, that Nancy, your cousin, and her cousin, was as fair as she is, as beautiful as she is, and as good as she is; ay, and in the sight of heaven, as great as she is. But the foul tempter came; and, sir, she is not yet eighteen, and the day that sees her eighteen may see her the mother of a poor helpless bastard, who, if there were justice on earth, is heir to that fine estate of Mr. Balshawe's, which the lawyers have settled on your daughter's children. I 've done my duty, now, sir: if you sell your daughter to him now, you do it with your eyes open."

Mr. Langshawe had, before this, resigned his place by his daughter to Mr. Ashworth. He listened attentively and quietly to all the hermit said, and then called Nancy (who had slunk behind) forwards.

"Come here, Nancy!" And his tone was such that she durst but obey; but, though there was a firmness in his tone that awed her, there was no want of kindness in his manner of taking her hand.

"Nancy, do not be afraid; speak the truth; and whatever you have done, or may do, I will

be a friend to you. You have been brought up in the fear of God, I know. Now, I ask you, in this sacred church, before God's holy altar, whether this young man promised to marry you? Nancy, speak the truth."

"I have no fear to speak the truth, sir, for it makes the only excuse for my shame. Sir, he did promise to marry me; he swore to marry me; and told me again and again that I should be as grand and as well dressed as my cousin at Lime Grove."

Mr. Langshawe clenched his fist involuntarily.

"He knew then that we were your cousins?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I often talked to him about you."

"And what excuse did he make for not marrying you, Nancy?"

"Oh, none, sir, none: he kept putting off; and at last he said he would marry me at once if my baby proved a boy;* and then, first, I

* This custom is not even yet quite exploded in the remoter districts of Lancashire. A loving couple take hands and vow to be faithful to each other for a year and a day: if the woman have a son the man is bound in honour to marry her, and generally does so; but if she be childless, or only have "a *wench*, which goes for nought," their previous connexion is in no way binding on him.

began to be a little frightened; but still not much, for I loved him; and so his selling me came on me like a thunderbolt."

"His selling you?"

"Yes: he gave poor Jem Forshawe twenty sovereigns to marry me; but I'm far below even poor Jem now. But indeed, indeed, sir," added she, bursting into tears again; "I didn't want to interfere between him and you, but Mr. Bladow forced me to come."

Mr. Langshawe turned towards his daughter; her eye met his, and she sprang towards him. He caught her in his arms, and pressed her again and again convulsively to his breast. From this moment, and for ever, father and daughter fully understood one another.

To describe Mr. John Balshawe's appearance and feelings during this scene would not be easy; he had not, in fact, been much attended to by any one; but he now came forward, hoping, or pretending to hope, to regain his former position.

"I regret, Mr. Langshawe, most deeply regret that this *contretems* should have occurred; nor will I attempt at this moment to justify my folly to you. You, who have seen so

much of the world, can make allowances for the temptations and errors of a hotheaded young man."

"I believe, sir, I can make full allowances for them."

"I knew you would," said Mr. John, his eyes sparkling; "then the ceremony may now proceed.

"What ceremony?"

"Why, the marriage."

"With my daughter, do you mean?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Langshawe, of course. What can you be thinking of?"

"I am thinking, Mr. John, that I would rather, *now*, lay my daughter in her coffin than give her to you."

The bridegroom stepped back in astonishment.

"I thought, sir, you said just now you could make full allowances for youthful indiscretions?"

"So I can; but not for yours."

"Oh! very well, sir, very well: if you are so exceedingly straight-laced, I hope you may find a saint for your daughter, and an accommodating banker for yourself. But—"

"Stop, Mr. John Balshawe; I do not expect

to find either: but listen to me for a few moments. I *can* make allowances, sir, for youthful indiscretions, for youthful folly, for youthful extravagance of all sorts—in a degree; and if that folly, or even crime, be the result of heat of blood, or want of thought. But your conduct to this poor girl, my relation, my daughter's cousin, has no such extenuating circumstances. It has been pursued on a regular system of cold, deliberate villany towards her; and with most insufferable disrespect towards my daughter, whose relative you knew Nancy to be. To the last day, to the last hour of my life, I shall thank God that my child had a friend less improvident than her father, and that her marriage with you has been prevented, even at this moment."

"Well, sir! well," said Balshawe, whom passion alone had kept silent, and whose words were now scarce intelligible: "well, sir, be it so! and the money you want—"

"Will, of course, not be forthcoming: for that I am prepared. Good morning!"

Mr. John Balshawe flung out of the church in a rage, which was not diminished by his brideman coolly declining to accompany him.

All now seemed bustle; and, for the first time, Edith begged a little water. As they were leading her to the vestry, she caught a glimpse of the retiring figures of Nancy and the hermit, and, always thoughtful for others, whispered to her father that Nancy must go to their house till he had found her a proper home. He followed them.

"Nancy, my dear, stay here with us. Bladow, my true friend, you had better return with us."

"No, sir; no, thank you; I must go and lay myself up in my own little crib: and poor Nance, here, she'd rather go with me. You can feel for her, Mr. Langshawe; she'd not mind you and Miss Edith; but she don't like your grand servants to see her trouble. She'll do well with me for a while."

"Then let her go with you by all means; but do not, Nancy, do not on any account leave Bladow's cottage till you hear from me."

So saying he put some money into Nancy's hand, and sent a verger for a hackney-coach, which he insisted on their taking three or four miles on the road home.

He then returned to the vestry, where he

found Edith, with infinitely more fainting and "lady-like" symptoms about her than she had exhibited before. But despite her tremors, there was a gleam on her pallid cheek which made her father's heart light within him: he secretly felt, and allowed at the moment, that he had not seen that formerly constant smile for many a weary week.

He missed Mr. Ashworth and Miss Wolstenholme. Nobody knew anything about them.

"Stolen a march upon us, for a wager," said the brideman; "they find your altar not propitious, sir, and are gone to another."

The clergyman smiled, but did not speak.

As soon as matters regarding Mr. John Balshawe seemed to be fully understood, Mr. Ashworth, with that ready and delicate sympathy which usually marked his conduct, told Harriet that he would hasten to Lime Grove, and prepare Mrs. Langshawe for her daughter's return unmarried. There were other female friends with Edith in the church, so Miss Wolstenholme returned with him.

This was all understood, and duly appreciated by Edith, when she saw Mr. Ashworth

waiting to hand her from the carriage, and Harriet in the hall, who led her, not to the spacious dining-room, where the sumptuous wedding collation waited, but to the quiet little breakfast-room, to her mother.

Mrs. Langshawe, crying bitterly, rushed to meet her. Edith, as she put her arms round her neck, whispered,—

"Mother, don't weep, for *I* am so happy!"

CHAPTER XIX.

TOO LATE.

"My destiny hath so involved about me
Her spider web, that I can only flutter,
Like the poor fly, but break it not."

WERNER.

WITH the exception of legacies to his servants, and a life-annuity to Caterina, Mr. Luttrell had left the whole of his enormous wealth to Bianca, and, in case of her death, to Walmsley, without tie or condition of any sort. Frank was deeply affected with this proof of his generosity and regard. In such admirable order, too, were all his affairs,—partly owing to his usual business-like habits, and more especially owing to his late withdrawal of his property from trade, that Frank, the dreaming and hitherto portionless Frank, had scarcely any trouble in stepping into possession of immense riches. Every facility which forethought could suggest had been provided for

him, and he felt, almost with a sensation of pain, that many of these minor, but relieving arrangements, must have been made by Mr. Luttrell even on his sick bed. Yet, when Frank had remonstrated, sometimes importunately with him, on admitting his attorney to such long and harassing interviews — interviews which generally left him oppressed with weakness and weariness—he never once gave the slightest hint or intimation that his young friend's interests were involved in his exertions. Frank felt this delicacy even painfully now.

But Bianca claimed more of his care, more of his thoughts, more of his anxiety than his newly-gotten wealth, or his late benefactor. Her grief on her grandfather's death was impetuous and overwhelming; nor did its impetuosity, as in most cases, seem to shorten its sway. Not even the endearments and soothing tenderness of her young husband, whom now she feared not to own she loved to idolatry, seemed at all to mitigate her anguish for him she had lost. On one point her whole heart and soul seemed to be fixed, the passion to leave, not merely Naples, but Italy,—to go to England. From private reasons, Frank would

gladly have combated this wish: he hardly felt nerve to present himself in England, even with a bride whom a stoic must have admired, and to whom he himself was becoming fondly attached. He proposed a tour in Greece, a sojourn in France; but no: Bianca conjured him so fondly, so earnestly not to combat her earnest wish, that he could not withstand her entreaties, especially when strengthened by some deprecatory confession of her own faults.

"I know why you don't like to take me, Frank; you are afraid I shall excite the ridicule, or perhaps the pity of your English friends by my impetuosity and passionate temper. But fear me not, love; I can be as cold and frigid as the snow on our mountains, when I feel that *you* wish it."

What could Frank say? Bianca was utterly and entirely mistaken, but he could not tell her so. It was himself he was afraid of, not her,—no, no, not her; excellent and exquisite as she was, with all her faults.

Their medical attendant did not like the idea of the English climate for her, but nevertheless advised their going, as determined opposition in her present highly excited and

nervous state might be attended with more serious consequences than even an unpropitious change of air; so Walmsley could hold out no longer. He had before written to his uncle a brief and simple statement of the circumstances which led to his marriage, and of the marriage itself; he now wrote to prepare him for the visit of his bride.

But, poor Frank! the very fates seemed to have conspired against him to prevent his obtaining any permanent peace of mind. As a matter of chivalrous honour and feeling, he had offered to marry Bianca even whilst he considered Miss Langshawe not unattainable, and while his own heart had not yielded one iota of its affection for and fidelity to her. The news of Miss Langshawe's infidelity and marriage made it only common policy on his part to drive her from his memory, and his own subsequent marriage with Bianca elevated that policy into a strict duty. The devoted affection, the exquisite beauty, and the high gifts of his young bride, added to her friendlessness, her deep sorrow, and her confiding dependence on him, were not without their effect on his heart; it would have been

strange if they had been. Yet, even yet, he shrunk from revisiting those scenes where remembrance of his first, and, as he still painfully felt, his unforgotten love, would mingle with every object he met. Care and kindness for Bianca, and that alone, caused him to struggle with and endeavour to subdue this repugnance to England.

And he was sincerely and earnestly smothering his own feelings, and thinking only of her, was hastening his preparations for departure, when a packet of letters from England was placed in his hands. Happy was it for him, happy was it for Bianca herself, that she was not with him when he read them. No wife, not even a phlegmatic English one, could have seen such emotion for such a cause unmoved; what would one of Bianca's excitable feelings and ungoverned impulses have felt? His cheek was ashen pale, his white lip quivered, his hands shook as if palsied. "*Not married,*" he muttered, "*not married, nor likely to be; 'broken off in the church at the altar,'*" casting his eye over the letter, "*which she, though unmarried, left like a gay bride, but had approached like a heart-broken nun.'*"

He groaned with anguish, and buried his face in his hands; after awhile, he again took up the letter.

"'*A forced marriage—always against her own will—her father's difficulties—a pre-engaged heart on her side, they say!*' Ay, sure, if ever a woman's heart in this world was given to a man, hers was given to me. Poor, poor Edith! and she loves me still, and I—" And again he buried his face in his hands.

But we shall not follow Mr. Walmsley's rhapsodies during the first burst of his passionate grief and dismay. Fortunately, he had given orders not to be disturbed—a usual direction with him since the accumulation of business on his hands—so that his struggles for composure were unwitnessed by any human eye. After the lapse of some hours, he repaired to the saloon as composed in appearance as usual—at least, so he flattered himself; but it was indeed self-deception, for Bianca's anxious love instantly took the alarm, and Caterina, who just then entered with fruit, uttered an ejaculation of dismay; he felt it was useless to attempt too much.

"I am not well Bianca, love; I have tired

myself with writing, and this heat kills me. I will lie down on this couch awhile, and you, dearest, bring your guitar."

She placed a cushion on the floor by the ottoman, and touching the strings softly, gently, in tones almost as aërial as the breathings of a spirit, she sang

THE FAIRY'S WHISPER.

By the light of the fire-fly
  In Zemora's grove,
When the stars faintly glimmer
  In heaven above ;
When the turtle-dove whispers
  Her amorous tale,
And the nightingale carols
  Her song in the vale ;
When the leaves to each other
  Sweet melody make,
And the note of the wild swan
  Is hush'd on the lake ;
When dim pines in the nightwind
  Bow softly around,
And the larch' thrilling murmur
  Re-echoes the sound ;
And when earth lies as spell-bound
  In silence and peace,
And the turbulent cares
  Of humanity cease—

Then I 'll lead thee where fresh water
Trembles 'neath the flowery grass,
And the spirit of the fountain
Scatters dewdrops as we pass
On the charmed fairy circle,
Hidden in the fragrant mead,
Where the spells of coming fortune
To blind mortals oft we read.
Haste then to the meeting
In Zemora's grove,
When stars faintly glimmer
In heaven above.

But, with the indecision which often characterised her, she rambled from the air before she had finished the song, and her fingers wandered over the strings in a mournful and melancholy cadence,

"A linked sweetness long drawn out,"

which harmonised well with the bitter memories which were filling her eyes with tears. It was *his* song; his especial favourite; and he was gone! Still the fingers wandered among the strings, and ere long, like the passing note of a spirit, the voice wandered with them.

Oh lost! for ever, ever gone,
No more that spirit o'er me smiles,
Which early won my trusting heart
With gentle wiles.

I see not now the form I lov'd,
Fond bending o'er me as of yore ;
That face where beam'd affection's smile,
I see no more.

For me no more that guardian hand
Shall gently smooth life's rugged way,
Nor through the briars track my path,
Where'er I stray.

Never again at early morn
A father's voice shall bid me rise,
Nor bless my couch when evening's star
Gleams in the skies.
For me no more——

It was too much. Flinging aside the guitar, she sank on her knees by the sofa, and gently wound her arms round her husband's neck. Could he resist the appeal? He never thought of it. He clasped her closely, fondly to his breast, and she wept there.

CHAPTER XX.

A COTTON-MAN SINKING.

"Sink not, my soul! my spirit rise and look
O'er the fair entries of this precious book:
Here are the sins, our debts."

CRABBE.

"I hear thee, solemn death!
Thy deep, dark whispering voice is in my heart;
There is a warning breath,
Which tells me that ere long I must depart."

SWAIN.

VARIOUS rumours of the circumstances attending the interruption of Miss Langshawe's marriage were quickly circulated about the town and neighbourhood, many of them as widely distant from the truth as could well be imagined. The main fact, however, seemed certain, that wedding there was to be none, and then—every mouth was opened, and on every hand Mr. Langshawe heard hints, inuendoes, and anecdotes, almost all tending to place the young bridegroom's conduct in other than

a favourable light. Without seeking unnecessarily for information, or implicitly believing all he did hear, Mr. Langshawe soon became sufficiently aware of divers propensities exhibited by the young man, which made him unequivocally rejoice to have discovered his almost fatal error before his daughter's happiness had been compromised: but, while thankful, with all a father's thankfulness, that this great trial was spared him, he now turned to grave anticipations of another kind.

Time—time—could he but gain that, all might yet be saved. Could he by any sacrifice, by any exertion, hold his head above water a little longer, all might yet be well. And to the furtherance of this object his every energy was directed. He took man's truest, and most devoted, if not wisest advisers into his counsels: he told his wife and daughter all—everything; and the very act of doing so lightened in some degree his weight of care.

"Surely," said Edith, "surely we might do something; the property about us is worth money."

The hint was taken, canvassed, dwelt upon, and presently adopted. Mr. Langshawe's beau-

tiful mansion, his magnificent furniture, his fine old wines, his carriages, horses, splendid plate, and available property of every kind was sold. He took a neat, small house at some little distance from this neighbourhood, and to this, which was furnished from the inferior apartments of his mansion, he presently retired with his wife and daughter, and only two servants, one of whom was the housekeeper, who had received notice of dismissal, and was offered her wages with the rest of the household, but who peremptorily refused to take either one or the other, or to stir from her mistress, with whom, in different capacities, she had lived thirty years.

"It was strange indeed," she said, "if the place that was good enough for them, was not good enough for her; and go to it she would."

During the progress of these alterations, Edith, in writing to Harriet Wolstenholme, named, of course, the change in their establishment; to this letter she received immediately the following reply from the young lady's father.

"My dear Miss Edith,

"As I have known you from a baby, and nursed you many a time in my arms, and had you many a time in my nursery with my own children, I think I have a right to ask you a favour; and I hope you will not refuse me, indeed I am sure you will not. My dear, I write to you because I expect you have more influence over your father than I have; and you must use it all. In short, my dear, you know this new house of mine is too large, and not comfortable, because we don't fill it, and my wife and I have been thinking how much warmer and happier we should be this coming winter if we had more people in it: in short, my dear, if you, and your father and mother, and what servants you please, would come now and stay six or twelve months, we should be as one family, and very comfortable, I 'm sure. Mrs. W. sends her kindest love, and all the rooms are quite ready, and she hopes you will come at once; and trusting that you will prevail on your parents to do so,

"I remain, my dear Miss Edith,

"Your very sincere friend,

"James Wolstenholme."

This sincerely friendly invitation was declined; but Edith added, that she hoped to be with her father and mother at the Christmas "house-warming" at Willow Bank.

Without a sigh, apparently, for the grandeur she had lost, the excellent wife of the Cotton lord accommodated herself to the change in her circumstances. She was as kind, as cheerful, as hospitable as ever; and if there were any change at all it was rather for the better, in the increase of animation which her more active household occupations caused.

Edith felt the change in external circumstances somewhat more keenly. She had never known any other, and the contrast was at first painfully striking. Not so to her mother, who had risen from low life, and was now only re-adopting a course of living which had formerly been familiar to her. But Edith was not of a disposition to be overcome by a change in temporal circumstances; her mind was too well ruled, her inclinations too much under judicious control for that; and indeed the lightness of heart which she felt at the decided removal of Mr. John Balshawe, prevented other matters from having so serious an effect on

her as perhaps they otherwise would. Still, it would be nonsense to say that she did not feel the change, and that sometimes a scalding tear of disappointment did not start to her eye. It seldom trickled down, however. She was devotedly fond of her father and mother, and she felt that if they, after the toil of a lifetime bore their deprivations with such calmness, it ill became her, who had known nor toil nor trouble, to throw a cloud over their content by murmurings or repinings.

So to her mother she was still more kind and affectionate, and to her father so devoted in her attentions that she seemed to anticipate his every wish. It was a beautiful sight to see this father and daughter thus clinging to and mutually supporting each other, in trifling perhaps, but in kind, and generous, and unwearying attentions, and building up in an affection of the purest and holiest nature, a tower of strength, from whence to repel the storms and troubles of the world.

One of these troubles was now pressing heavily on Edith, and her father, fully awake at last to all her feelings, saw that it was; but now, alas! the time for reparation on his part had

passed, and he could only hope and pray in silence for the daughter whose happiness he had so sadly interfered with. Mr. Walmsley had arrived again in Manchester, and with him his Italian bride, whose youth, loveliness, and grace were the theme of every tongue.

Most earnestly, and with the purest sincerity did Edith strive, not merely to conquer the rebellious heart which yet warmed towards him, but she schooled herself to meet him, as meet him she probably soon must, with the indifference of a mere friendly acquaintance. Still she rejoiced that, from their present seclusion, this meeting would probably be delayed awhile, especially as Mrs. Frances Halling, from whose cottage their own present residence was but a stone's throw, was absent on a visit. This lady was on the most intimate terms with Mr. Ainsley, and consequently, had she been at home, immediate intercourse would have been inevitable, as Edith shrunk with sensitive consciousness from anything which might be construed into avoidance of Mr. Walmsley.

On crossing the small court at the back of the house one day, Miss Langshawe was

surprised to see tokens of habitation in the stable, and, opening the door, was instantly greeted by the joyful neigh of her own beautiful mare. Surprised and delighted, she scarcely stopped to stroke the animal ere she ran to the house to thank her father, to whom she had no doubt she was indebted for this agreeable surprise. It was not so, however. Mr. Langshawe knew as little of the matter as herself; but she quickly found the donor in Mr. Ashworth, their ever kind and attentive friend. At first he received their acknowledgments, but with a sort of equivocal expression that puzzled them. At length he exclaimed,

"It does not signify, Miss Langshawe, I can carry on this farce no longer. I bought the horse, to be sure, but it was but as the agent of another."

"Of whom?"

"I cannot tell you. I have pledged my word not to tell."

And to Edith the matter remained a mystery for some time; but as there is no need that it should be one to our readers, we may tell them that Mr. Ainsley, delighted with the

glowing account which Mr. Ashworth gave of Edith's conduct, of her being the first to propose the economical measures which had been resorted to, and of her exemplary conduct under her deprivations, took this delicate method of expressing his approbation; perhaps we should rather say, of gratifying his own feelings, for he made it a decided point with Mr. Ashworth that his name should not appear in the transaction, and this gentleman was too anxious to secure to his favourite the beautiful and valuable animal in which he knew she delighted, to hesitate in giving the required pledge.

One of her first expeditions on her recovered favourite was to the abode of the hermit, who welcomed her with more than his accustomed delight. He was, of course, well acquainted with the changes that had taken place, and his conduct displayed a tact and delicacy which would have done credit to a higher sphere. He was not well himself, and he seemed to be labouring under depressing influences, which Edith strove in vain to repel.

"No, Miss Langshawe, no. Ye mean kindly, I know; but neither you, nor any one else,

can tell my feelings. I know that I 'm sinking, and that all the doctors' stuff in the world would do me no good; many thanks to you, all the same."

"But a medical man might give you *some* relief, if you would allow me to send one."

"What should he relieve, Miss Langshawe; I 've no pain; I 'm not ill. No, my dear young lady, no; my time is nearly spent; I feel that; I know it. I 've had warnings," said he solemnly, and somewhat superstitiously, "I 've had warnings which I cannot misunderstand, and I know I 'm not long for earth."

Edith, who saw no change in him, except perhaps a little addititional feebleness, (as she had never known him other than a weakly man, this did not strike her as anything extraordinary,) thought this was merely a temporary depression of spirits, which would wear off; but she was mistaken. The result justified his gloomiest anticipations. As she perceived him rapidly worsening, she not only prevailed on him to have medical assistance, which she procured for him, but went herself more frequently to see him. On one of these

occasions he asked, "Would she grant him a great favour?" Edith readily promised.

"You told me you had a warm sunny garden at your new place, will you let me send my bees there? I can't bear the idea of the beautiful, useful little creatures, that I have watched day after day for years, I can't bear the idea of them losing their lives because a useless old man like me dies."

"But why should they lose their lives, Bladow? There will be people to take care of them."

"No, but that isn't it. Don't you know, Miss Edith, that there 's a sympathy in those little beings which will not let them live after the hand that sees to them is gone? and why should they die for me? Do, my dear Miss Langshawe, let me send them to your garden, that they may get used to it afore my time comes."

Edith was well acquainted with the popular superstition to which he alluded, and, as she saw no possible good in combating it, at that moment, she consented to the request, and the bees were removed accordingly.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TALE OF TRUE LOVE.

"To be resigned when ills betide,
Patient when favours are denied,
And pleased with favours given—
Most surely this is wisdom's part,
This is that incense of the heart,
Whose fragrance breathes to heav'n."

COTTON.

"The phantom of thy form visited me in my slumber."

Mohammedan Hymn.

CALMLY and quietly Mr. and Mrs. Langshawe held on their new course; they had but one interest, they were actuated by but one will, and with one accord they pursued a system of seclusion and rigid economy. Even the Cotton lord, after the escape his daughter had had, looked on other troubles with comparative calmness, and Edith was comparatively happy.

It is difficult to define happiness. Each individual has perhaps a different *beau idéal* of this beautiful but fugitive vision, which, however, always recedes before our advancing steps. It is very usual for superficially thinking people, who have become soured and desponding by their intercourse with the world, to speak of the happiness of "school-days." Surely *they forget their own;* it is certainly a mistake to call school-days the happiest. All, indeed, depends on the different idea which people may have of it. If happiness be merely a sensual sort of vague enjoyment, without a care, without a thought—school-days may have this certainly; though they have as certainly an equal share of vague misery, of heartfelt sorrows, which, however trivial their cause, are yet deluged in real unaffected tears. And can that be happiness which is so perfectly unconscious of mental influences as the happiness of a school-boy? It is mere instinct and animal health, and as such is interrupted, nay, annihilated, for the time, by any disheartening circumstances which may occur. If the mental intoxication which is caused by excitation of spirits and brilliant fancy be called happiness,

this hardly appertains to school-days, because those radiant imaginings, those halcyon colourings, those excited ideas, are generally the offspring of a somewhat more advanced season, when the passions are awakening, and Imagination, leaving Experience in her rear, tints every object *couleur de rose;* and at this period of life, more perhaps than at any other, have depressing feelings, when they do occur, deep hold on the mind; for then we believe not in the softening and calming influence of time to abate our keen sense of sorrow; we fancy our feelings will ever be as acute as they now are; and we invest a sorrow, half imaginary, with all the withering influences of stern reality.

Happiness is a plant not indigenous to earth; it is but an exotic, fragile in blossom, speedy in decay. It frequently blooms here, to be sure, and its amaranthine flowers sparkle in the depths of many a gloomy forest, or gleam like a sunbeam on many an extended waste and fearful wild. It is comparatively seldom seen in the brilliant parterre, or in the gorgeous and glittering conservatory; by the lone wayside it casts a ray of beauty; in the cottage glade it often lifts its modest head. Though crushed and

withered here, it is rooted in immortal soil, and the tears of sorrow with which it is watered will oftentimes produce a fair and lasting bloom.

As a meteor light which, ever alluring us by its gleam, yet ever receding before our steps, would lead us over bog and wild, only in the end to plunge us in deeper obscurity, so do our undefined yet vividly-coloured notions of happiness lead us onward in pursuit of some object which shines so brightly in the distance as to cause us to pass carelessly those minuter ones within our grasp, which, being easily acquired, are apt to be treated with contempt, and which yet, if duly hoarded, would amount to no slight sum of comfort.

But it requires no great length of years, nor depth of experience, in those who have been accustomed to reflect at all, to ascertain that little permanent and unbroken happiness is to be expected here, and that the only circumstances from which we can confidently look to derive heartfelt gratification are those in which, despite temptation or sorrow, we have done our duty. This reflection it was which was restoring the buoyancy to Edith's step and the

colour to her cheek, notwithstanding the continuance of adverse circumstances in her father's affairs (which to many girls of her own age would have seemed in themselves sufficiently depressing,) and the utter annihilation of all hope in regard to Mr. Walmsley by his marriage. And in the latter case, she had not that charming anodyne which "spirit" bestows; she could not find any consolation in thinking of her quondam lover with anger or contempt; for she felt neither: she herself had broken off the connexion, not he—he was blameless. Undoubtedly this circumstance increased her difficulty; but Edith, though a most affectionate, was a high-minded girl, and did not shrink from difficulty.

Without imparting the slightest tinge of *saint*-ism either to her manners or conversation, her excellent friend and governess, Mrs. Maitland, had strongly impressed on Edith's mind the real uncertainty of all earthly good, the folly and presumption of placing our reliance on it, and the paramount necessity of perpetual mental reference to a higher sphere. Her precepts were sown in a good soil, and her own admirable example went far to mature the

fruit. Edith had probably never been heard to utter a religious sentence, and she had danced, and laughed, and sung as merrily as any one, but strong religious principle had become the pervading tone of her mind, and this it was which had enabled her not only to bear bitter disappointment with patience, but even now caused her to regard the absence of absolute evil as positive good. When first forbidden to think more of Mr. Walmsley her heart had well-nigh broken, but she subdued her feelings to what she considered to be her duty, and the exertion had brought its own reward. She could not, and she felt that she could not ever, so far subdue her predilection for him as to think of any one else; but this there was no occasion for, and she had but to glance momentarily at the time when Mr. John Balshawe was likely to become her husband, to feel not only contented but thankful with her present lot. She had resumed all her old occupations, all her wonted pursuits, and she was now returning from one of her frequent visits to William Bladow, when she perceived a gentleman advancing, whom she instantly knew to be Mr. Walmsley.

To say that her heart did not beat quicker, her breath come short, would be to endue her with more than mortal calmness and fortitude, but she did not betray her emotion. As her former lover came near her she cordially held out her hand to him, but having given him this unequivocal token of friendship, she did not prolong the interview a moment, but passed hastily on.

Nothing could be more respectful than Mr. Walmsley's greeting, though he was the least self-possessed of the two, and he continued to watch Edith after they had parted as long as she remained in sight. He then looked round him, and judging from the direction in which he first caught sight of Miss Langshawe, he concluded that she had been to visit the hermit: this brought to his memory the recollection of his own visit there, and of the old man's invitation to him to repeat it. Sooth to say, this invitation had scarcely since ever crossed his mind, yet now he yielded to the impulse which came so opportunely, and turned his steps to the hermitage.

Visitors thither usually went over the common, and so by a more convenient path arrived

at the opposite side from that which the garden fronted. This, however, Frank did not know, and he took the path through the dingle, along which, perhaps, our readers will remember Edith had once pioneered him. The little garden had not its wonted appearance, the autumn, to be sure, was far advanced, and some of the trees and plants were bare, but there were enough unwithered yet to give a cheerful aspect had care been bestowed upon them; but this seemed to be wanting. The busy insects sent out a merry murmur, and the birds were twittering cheerily, but the garden looked untidy and deserted. Much wondering, Mr. Walmsley made his way to the cottage, the door of which was a-jar. He knocked gently, but heard only the short single bark of a dog in reply; he pushed the door open, and on the instant the dog was at his heels to dispute his passage. From whatever cause, however, it was speedily reconciled, and Frank made his way into the little apartment from which he now heard a feeble voice say, "Come in."

There he found the hermit, attired as usual, but else how different! He sat, or rather

reclined on a large antique high-backed chair, propped up by cushions and pillows, but looking more like a corpse than a living being. Pale he always was, but now he was almost ghastly, and his restless grey eye flashed with unnatural lustre, its unsettled glances contrasting the more strongly with the extreme placidity of his general appearance. As his head rested back his white hair lay on his shoulders, and he moved not a limb, except to fondle the dog which now lay at his side, and kept thrusting his head upward for the caress. No other person was visible, nor was a sound heard.

Mr. Walmsley was shocked.

"I fear you are very ill," said he.

"Thank ye, thank ye," said the old man without moving or looking at him.

"Can I do anything for you?"

Whether the tone was more earnest than before, or whatever the cause, the hermit was evidently startled. He turned to Mr. Walmsley, fixed his eyes on him, and then, as if not seeing with sufficient clearness, he raised himself in his chair and shaded his eyes with his hand, still keeping them fixed; and that some unwonted feeling was passing within was evi-

dent from the colour which gradually suffused his pale face.

"You do not remember me," said Frank, gently: "I came here once with Miss Langshawe,—you seem very ill; I shall be most pleased if I can do anything for you."

The hermit let his hand drop as he resumed his old position, and muttered,—"Not remember,—not remember,—I shall forget no more—I am going to her.

"To whom?" said Frank.

"To whom? why, to Mary to be sure—who spoke? who are you?" said he very quickly, again raising his head, and turning it from side to side.

Mr. Walmsley was now seriously alarmed, thinking that he was absolutely deranged. He, however, took his hand and held it firmly, speaking the while gentle and soothing words. At this moment a woman came into the hut; from her manner she was evidently in attendance there, and the visitor spoke to her, saying that he feared his abrupt entrance had discomposed the old man. She replied civilly that he must not mind it, the old man was often so, but they had some soothing stuff

from the doctor, which always did him good, and which she would give to him now. She forthwith produced the physic bottle, and offered it to Frank to examine and to taste, and he did not at all rise in her good graces by declining, in his ignorance of country ways, to do either.*

The woman administered the dose to her invalid, who shortly closed his eyes, and if not asleep, appeared quite placid and quiet; she then turned to Frank, to know "if she might be so bold as to ask whether he was going to remain long?"

"Why do you inquire, good woman?"

"Because if you are, sir, I 'll just step out for half an hour, for some things I want."

"Go, by all means; I will, at all events, stay that length of time."

* You cannot enter a Lancashire country cottage where, if there be an invalid, you are not offered the "doctor's stuff" to taste; if you examine the bottle with a wise countenance you do much, but if you venture to let the medicine approach your lips, you win all hearts. They are not chary of the life-bestowing beverage either; they uncork the phial, and advance it towards your mouth, telling you "not to be afeard, but to take a good suck out o' th' bottle."

And so he suddenly found himself appointed to a solitary watch over a dying man.

It was not long before the hermit awoke from his slumber, and looked round him with a much more composed air than he had done at first. When Frank addressed him he again scanned him curiously, and at length spoke in a feeble and faltering voice.

"I was afraid, young gentleman, you did not mean to come again to see me."

"Have you, indeed, remembered and wished for me?" said Frank, surprised.

"Remembered! Oh yes, sir; you have features in your face that I cannot forget; my very heart told me who you were before I asked Miss Langshawe your name. But it is likely you never heard of me—most likely, indeed," continued he, musingly, — "most likely indeed, and very right."

Mr. Walmsley both looked and expressed his curiosity.

"I am going," said the old man, and he spoke more as if communing with himself than conversing with another,—"I am going where rank, and wealth, and power, are of no avail, but where a loving heart may be

free to show its love; and it seems as if it was done in mercy, that *her* son should come to close my eyes. I have been weak and foolish, sir," said he, turning once more to his visitor; "I have wasted that life on myself and my own regrets which should have been spent among my fellow creatures, where I was placed. But my great trouble threw a cloud over me. Oh! it is a fearful thing to part two loving hearts; two people that feel and know they have in themselves the greatest blessing that God sends on earth below, faithful, enduring, constant love,—perhaps my mind was not strong—I 've heard people say so, and perhaps it was so; I pray God it was; I pray God in his mercy to lay it to anything but a perverse will that I have so thrown away the life he gave."

"You have had some great trouble?" said Frank.

"Young sir, I will tell you all. If his anger is not long ago gone, it will at least be buried in my grave, for your uncle has a generous heart."

"My uncle!" exclaimed Walmsley.

"I dare say you know, sir," said the her-

mit, not noticing the interruption, "that your uncle, like most others of his circle, has raised himself to the greatness he now holds, and that he was originally a poor mechanic."

Frank intimated his assent.

"Well, sir, we were friends and companions, as our mutual station justified; but though equal in rank we were vastly different in other ways; your uncle was far, far above me in everything that was likely to raise him in the world. But insignificant as I was, Mary Ainsley looked kindly on me—yes, sir," observing Frank start, "your own sainted mother knew that I loved her as my very soul, and she did not forbid me. We engaged ourselves to be married. But her beauty and her goodness gained her other regards than mine, and one higher and better to do in the world made her an offer, which her brother would fain have her accept. She, poor gentle creature, dare not tell him of our vows, but I did manfully, and insisted on our right to please ourselves. Mr. Ainsley stormed at first, but finding that did not answer, he took other ways; and then, sir, not to weary you—he had the strong head, I the weak one,—he

contrived to put it into my mind that I was injuring her I loved best in the world by alluring her to a poor marriage, when a higher one waited her. So I gave up, and she—who was always timid and submissive to him—thinking I had deserted her, had no heart to resist him, and she went to the altar, as I believe, a weeping bride. I," continued the hermit, his feeble voice becoming still feebler and husky, "I had no heart to work, then,—what did I want with money then—I could not bear a place where every tree and every cottage reminded me of her—I felt as if I should go mad—and I came here."

He stopped, and for some moments Mr. Walmsley could not speak; at length he did, and asked earnestly, almost imploringly, if he could not do anything for him.

"You can," said the old man, as the tears trickled fast down his pale cheeks; "you can, and that is why I have told you my long story. This," said he, putting his shaking hand into his vest, and with difficulty drawing out a small matter, "this has lain next my heart for more than twenty years past, and I want you, if you will not despise an old man's weakness,

I want you to promise me that it shall be laid in my coffin."

"I do solemnly promise you," gasped Walmsley.

In the miniature, coarsely, badly executed as it was, and full of glaring faults, he had no difficulty in recognising the lineaments of his mother. She died in giving him birth, but a portrait of her, which his uncle assured him was a very good likeness, hung in his dressing-room.

"And now, sir," said Bladow, taking Frank's hand, "may God Almighty bless you; and be so good as to bear my respects to your uncle, and tell him I thought of him kindly to the last."

"I hope you may yet recruit."

"Hope it, sir, why do you hope it?" said he quickly, his eye again beginning to glance with its uncertain expression; "would you keep me from her any longer?"

Frank saw that the aberration of mind was returning, which, indeed, it did very suddenly. He became exceedingly restless, turned his head from one side to another with great rapidity, and at last started forward, and would

have fallen, if Frank had not supported him.

"Don't you see? she's beckoning now! Mary! Mary ——"

He fell back, utterly exhausted, and, as Frank feared, dying. It was not so, however, he had fainted. Mr. Walmsley was in a most distressing situation, and was truly thankful to be relieved by the timely entrance of the attendant.

CHAPTER XXII.

A DEATH.

"The drooping year is in the wane,
No longer floats the thistle down;
The crimson heath is wan and sere;
The sedge hangs withering by the mere,
And the broad fern is rent and brown."

MARY HOWITT.

"When our friends we lose,
Our alter'd feelings alter too our views;
Virtues neglected, then adored become,
And graces slighted, blossom on the tomb."

CRABBE.

IT was a dreary day, late in autumn; such a day as hastens on winter apace. The wind had blown in sullen gusts all the morning, and the rain had been falling fast and dree. Towards afternoon it abated; the heavy clouds broke, and at intervals the sun gleamed brightly through the still fast-falling drops. Mr. Ainsley and his nephew had driven from town, and

the carriage was left at a farm-house before mentioned, whilst they proceeded on foot to the hermit's humble and lonely abode. The rain had ceased when they alighted from the carriage, but the wintry wind, as it shrilly and mournfully sounded the dirge of autumn, shook showers of wet from the saturated trees. Very melancholy did the dingle look as they slowly wended their way through the thick wet grass. Mr. Ainsley shivered as he advanced, and more than once halted, as if communing with himself whether to proceed or not; but his hesitations were but momentary, and he followed his nephew's rapid footsteps as quickly as he could; but, uncertain of his footing, somewhat less agile in his limbs, and withal having considerably less of that internal impulse which was urging Frank onward, he was, at length, obliged to beg for a little relaxation of speed. Apologising for his thoughtlessness, Mr. Walmsley immediately accommodated his pace to his uncle's, and they proceeded slowly down the glen.

It presented then a melancholy aspect. The wild rose heps and the berries of the hawthorn were yet bright on their leafless boughs; but

their very vividness seemed in the contrast to impart a deeper tinge of decay to the scenery around. The willow and the beech were nearly bare; the witch-elm hung out its crimson clusters, almost unrelieved by the scanty withered foliage; the remaining oak-leaves were sickly and decaying; and clouds of these lingerers were borne along with every gust of wind to the ground, where their fellows, the pride of the dingle, lay in heaps, or were wafted into the little rivulet, whose current was already impeded by them. The birds were mute as death; scarcely a solitary chirp was heard, and no living thing was visible, except the large black snails, which seemed almost to beset the path.

"This is a dismal spot, Frank."

"I would, sir, you had seen it under another aspect: you would have thought it the most beautiful spot in creation."

"Truly, it must have been under another aspect! an aspect which, I shrewdly imagine, is indebted for much of its brilliancy to your own sunny imagination."

"Oh, no, I assure you. But don't give up, uncle; we are almost at the cottage."

"Sir, I am not in the habit of 'giving up,' as you term it. But whatever implication the acknowledgment may bring on my taste, I must plead guilty to preferring the comfortable flagged pavement of King Street or Mosley Street on a wet day, to the very delightful, safe, commodious, and exquisitely romantic pilgrimage you have brought me."

Frank laughed: and chatting thus, they arrived at the garden gate. The aspect here was even more melancholy than the scene leading to it. There is a fitness, a unison in the decay of merely natural objects which imparts a beauty to them even in their saddest state; and a softening and hopeful interest hangs over them, connected with the certainty of their future re-animation and restored beauty, which prevents the idea of their present desolation from taking exclusive possession of the feelings. We see the leaves fade and fall, the branches of the trees become bare and black, the herbage brown and unsightly, the pastures dark, and shriveled, and bare, but we know and feel that, surely as the sun rises in heaven, all these things shall be restored to full and triumphant beauty. But with human produc-

tions it is not so; and scarcely have they attained maturity ere the sure hand of irremediable decay is upon them, and they sink, gradually perhaps, but irretrievably. A humble but a striking instance of this was afforded by the hermit's little garden. The very neatness and precision of its usual arrangements, added to the appearance of decay; the neat and trim box-borders appearing here and there above the wilderness of dead leaves, the grotesque ornaments smeared with soil and wet, the trim palings broken, boughs snapped by the wind, scattered here and there, and lying where they listed—one, in particular, a branch of the weeping-birch, not entirely separated from the parent trunk, but recklessly hanging across the very front of the bee-house, which, wet and dismal, gave no token of life within,—these, and many such tokens, did Frank's quick eye immediately detect, and his romantic fancy instantly designated as symptoms of more than temporary decay. "The master-hand," he thought, "that wrought delightedly here, is even now mouldering, and the fairy scene he has created will sink to oblivion with him! Yes, it is all right it should be so."

As they got nearer to the cottage, from which a large trailing branch of clematis, dead and black, was loosened, and was straying to and fro in the wind, they perceived the hermit's pony, which had left its shed, and was standing with drooping head by the porch, listless and stupid. Frank stroked its neck, but it moved not, nor appeared to notice the action. He was making some remark on the animal as he entered the cottage, but both gentlemen were awed to silence by the sight which greeted them there.

Stretched on his humble bed, with closed eyes, pale and placid, but evidently dying, lay the hermit. Miss Langshawe was on one side the bed, moistening his lips with some liquid; a clergyman, who had apparently been performing the last offices of religion, was on the other; a respectable elderly woman, whom Mr. Walmsley recognised as Mr. Langshawe's housekeeper, was occupied near him, while the cottager who had attended Bladow was moving about in the next room. On the bed, at the foot, lay the dog, looking wistfully at his dying master, and ever and anon stretching forth his head towards the hand which, listlessly

extended on the coverlid, had for ever ceased to bestow the accustomed caress.

Deeply did Miss Langshawe's cheek flush as her eye encountered Frank's, and tremulously did her hand shake as she withdrew it from the invalid. It was evident that their first meeting in this very hut recurred to the minds of both. Her agitation was but momentary, however; she recovered her self-possession more quickly even than he did, though, indeed, the scene in which they were engaged was one which might well, for the time, annihilate all selfish feeling.

Oh! it is an awful thing to be a watcher at the bed of death! How all superficial distinctions fade from the mind! how all customary feelings, such as we usually consider the very life of our being, how they sink into utter nothingness. With what supremacy, what dignity, is a dying man invested: all earthly distinctions fleet as unsubstantial shadows before his eye, and are felt, at the moment, as of little more importance by others. The proud and haughty Mr. Ainsley, whose whole career had been an energetic aspiration after the lofty things of life, who had toiled, had striven with unflinching, unabating energy

day after day, year after year, to attain that eminence on which he now so proudly stood,—who had thought no personal sacrifice, no personal deprivation too severe which should serve but to raise him one step on ambition's ladder,—in one moment felt the cherished principles of a life sink into emptiness at the scene before him. It is often said, that in death—even indeed before death has absolutely supervened—the features, as the impress of worldly thoughts and habits and passions is passing away, will assume much of the expression and appearance they wore in early youth; and this is more especially the case when life has been tranquil in its course, unmoved by violent passions, uninfluenced by extreme vicissitudes. Such had been eminently the case with the hermit. And now, despite the lines and wrinkles of age, despite the time-blanched locks and the silvery beard, his countenance—the expression of it—was so exactly what it had been when, years ago, Mr. Ainsley had last seen him, that this gentleman was struck to the heart. In an instant the scenes of youth and early manhood—scenes, the remembrance of which had long been effaced by

the bustle and turmoil of active and ambitious life—passed through his mind. He remembered how they had associated as boys, as youths; he remembered, with a feeling almost amounting to agony, how, when once driven almost to extremity, without food and without money, Bladow had given him a meal, and insisted on sharing his last shilling with him. True, the debt had been repaid twenty-fold; but the deep obligation was still the same, and felt now more keenly than ever. Then came memories still gentler, and still more melancholy. He thought of his fair and gentle sister, who loved him with more than a sister's affection, who trusted to him in everything, who obeyed him in all things; and who implicitly, though weepingly, yielded to his behest, and sacrificed this, the object of her early affection, to a union which he had thoroughly convinced himself, and tried to convince her was for her good. And was it so? And was she happy? He shrank from the question. And then, her early death!—but that was better—better surely than the lingering, self-abandonment in life of the being before him. And for this, for this, at any rate, was he not answerable?

In far less time than they have taken to write, did these thoughts, and many other such, pass through the mind of the Cotton lord. Their effect was electrical. His assumed habits, his acquired disposition, his pride, his haughtiness, his worldly elevation—all, all gave way to the influence of the better thoughts, of the early, uncorrupted, unhardened feelings of his youth, now rushing across his mind. His very soul was subdued; he knelt down by the homely bed, and taking the hand of the dying man in his own, he gave way to the agitation which shook him. Frank, shocked and alarmed, tried to soothe and to remove him, but it was in vain; nature, for once, would have her way, and it was some moments before he resumed anything like composure.

But the effort was at length made, and successfully, and he took a seat placed for him, and surveyed the scene with deep interest. Peculiar and strange as everything around him seemed, they could, however, withdraw his regards for a very short moment from the object which had at first so strongly riveted them. The hermit lay pale, still, motionless, and but for his breathing, which was gentle as

an infant's, you might have thought life had already departed, so calm, so still he was. Gentle impressions, hardly amounting to smiles, flitted over his countenance, as if his dreams were happy; or, as if those pure and holy visitants who minister round a good man's pillow, were shedding their gracious influence on his departing spirit. No word was spoken. Every eye was bent on the dying man, watching with intense solicitude the awful moment so evidently approaching. But his sleep continued calm, deep, and unbroken.

At length the sun, which for some time had been struggling amid the clouds, and gleaming fitfully at intervals amongst their broken masses, suddenly burst forth, lighting up hill and valley, meadow and tree, in one blaze of glory; his bright beams, sparkling and glistering, darted right into the sick room, and before Miss Langshawe, who started up for the purpose, could close the curtain, wakened the sick man. The deathlike sleep, which remained unbroken by the bustle of mortals round his bed, melted beneath the first glance of this messenger from heaven; for such, indeed, it might not inaptly be termed.

His eye was clear and steady; its usual unsettled glancing had quite disappeared; the cloud that for years had dimmed his faculties was gone; he looked perfectly intelligent. He cast his eye round him; it rested for a moment on Miss Langshawe, on Mr. Walmsley, and when it first fell on Mr. Ainsley a slight start, a momentary suffusion was visible,—so slight and instantaneous, however, as to be scarcely perceptible. All earthly emotions were fast passing away.

Mr. Ainsley, much affected, took his hand.

"God bless you, Bladow!"

The hermit turned his eyes on him with an earnest look of kindness and affection, and laboured earnestly to articulate something; but it was almost inaudible, quite unintelligible.

At this moment a sunbeam of surprising brightness darted full on the face of the dying man, seeming to invest his countenance with a halo of supernatural light: it lingered not long, but as it faded its parting rays glistered on the face of the dead. The hermit was at rest.

The evening was now magnificent. The

clouds, which had hung over the firmament all day, were fleeting away on every side, leaving the sky a clear deep blue, save where the setting sun illumined it with his glowing rays. The rain-drops quivered, and glanced, and sparkled; the few remaining leaves rustled with a merry noise, and the birds darted here and there, twittering and chirping, and rendering the dingle vocal with their cheerful notes.

It was Mr. Ainsley's arm which supported Edith, with much kindness, from the dwelling of the hermit. With gentle compulsion he made her enter his carriage, and set her down at the door of her father's now humble abode.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONTRASTS.

"Look here, upon this picture, and on this."

SHAKSPEARE.

"Read, ye that run, the awful truth,
With which I charge my page;
A worm is in the bud of youth,
And at the root of age."

COWPER.

THOUGH the rumblings of discontent were beginning to be heard in the districts around Manchester, these rumblings were of too frequent an occurrence to be greatly heeded in their outset, especially in the town itself, where the potential spinners were contented, and their policy was peace. Therefore the magnates, great and little, of this metropolis (that is, according to the definition given in a preceding chapter, those who sold a piece of calico whole, and those who cut it in half,) all these, accord-

ing to their various opportunities and means, prepared themselves for a brilliant winter, and for the full gratification of that gaiety, the thirst for which the festival had but excited, not quenched. Private fancy balls were all the rage: the luxurious dinner was contemned: the accustomed musical parties lost their zest: nothing would "go down" but fancy balls; and even in the "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" mansion of a fourth-rate "cotton-man," his lady would request her friends to come in their "fancy dresses," and with inexplicable ingenuity would contrive a quadrille in the back parlour; all the furniture having been previously removed in order to enable the eight Brigands, Turks, Spanish ladies, or Swiss peasants to display their graces there. Never were Manchester ladies and Manchester milliners so happy.

But in one Manchester circle at this time was a novelty far more attractive, far more interesting than any which the unaccustomed festival had introduced. This was the beautiful Italian bride, the youthful and gifted Bianca. Her beauty and her grace would have attracted admiration anywhere; her exquisite

musical talent could in few places in England be so duly appreciated as in this town; and in the more especial circle of her husband's friends her refined and cultivated habits were not shocked, even though that circle was composed of the far-famed Manchester Cottonocracy. That party soon came to be considered dull and deficient in which she was not; and she was courted and *fêted* to idolatry.

Her husband could not be, and was not indifferent to the admiration she excited, but to the proud spirit of his uncle it was as most grateful incense.

To the fair bride herself this excessive adulation was matter of indifference, at times almost of contempt. The pleased glance of her idolized husband was all she saw, all she thought of, when surrounded by incense and flattery; and to gratify him, and for that object alone, she gave into a round of visiting unsuited to the present tone of her mind, foreign to her usual habits, and prejudicial, fearfully prejudicial to her health. Constitutionally and inherently most delicate, her own illness and her grandfather's death had given a shock to her frame which she had not re-

covered: the English climate was unpropitious to her, the season a sad one; exposure to the night air after passing hours in hot and crowded rooms, was, despite every care of wraps and closed carriage-windows, attended with its frequent effect, and ere the gaieties of Christmas came, Bianca was under close and anxious attendance in Mr. Ainsley's house, a confirmed invalid.

Anxious, most anxious, were both that gentleman and his nephew, and bitterly did they reproach themselves for the thoughtlessness on their parts which had exposed her to such risk. They seemed now, in the anguish of their self-blame, inclined to attribute her illness solely to the ill-judged gaieties in which they had urged her to participate, and it was almost a relief when their experienced medical attendant said, that though this injudicious course had probably increased the evil, it had not induced it. To Frank he said no more, but in Mr. Ainsley's private ear he whispered the shuddering intimation, that in all probability consumption had laid his deadly grasp on her fair form even before she quitted her native land.

So in one princely mansion the festive season was abruptly terminated. SORROW was at the threshold; his blighting footsteps were not less scaithing because he was shod in gold; his stalwart frame looked no whit less appalling because it was robed in ermine; nor could the glittering jewels on his brow impart even a gleam of their light to his heavy and sunken eye. Mr. Ainsley would have given all, every guinea of his hard-earned wealth to have removed the fevered bloom from Bianca's young cheek, the unwonted languor from her youthful frame. He almost felt riches a mockery.

He might: for happier, far happier than himself, even whilst watching his last guineas glide irreparably from his grasp, was that cotton man whom he had formerly contemned and despised, Mr. Langshawe; nay, happier than himself were now the toiling and fugitive family, "the miserable operatives," who had been driven from their native hearth by shame, and who were now in a confined and unwholesome home, earning their daily bread, a scanty crust, in the sweat of their brow:—yes, they were now happier than the merchant

prince, for his child was dying, and their's was restored to them, as if from the grave.

One of Mr. Langshawe's first cares, after hearing his kinswoman's history and circumstances from the hermit, (who had learned her retreat accidentally in his pedestrian ramble in Yorkshire,) was to restore Nancy to her parents. She refused at first, with shame and tears, but Mr. Langshawe insisted, and moreover, *he took her himself*, having first prepared her parents by a letter.

Not a reproach, spoken or implied, met the repentant wanderer on her return to her father's roof; tears, indeed, there were, but not bitter ones, for they were mingled with heartfelt blessing and welcome. This reception humbled Nancy to the dust, and it was some days before she could hold up her head, or look on those around her; but her father's kind and judicious remonstrances, and more than that, her mother's and sisters' evident comfort and happiness in having her again, roused her to a better frame of mind. Mr. Langshawe had, with considerate and judicious kindness, left a sum of money sufficient, he said, to prevent the necessity of Nancy's work-

ing hard at present, and Mrs. Langshawe would take care of her by and by; he had also sent in some great, though homely household comforts, in the shape of furniture, fuel, &c., of which his quick glance detected the absence; and, moreover, he had said he should look at them again in the course of a few months; and they knew that this meant a good deal.

Knowing that active employment was the best thing for Nancy in her present depressed state of mind, Halliwell insisted that she should take the care of the little household, whilst, being relieved from this occupation, the mother should go to the mill to work with her family—for, alas! all who were old enough now went to the mill; they had no looms at home. Nancy of course obeyed; and when a few days convinced her that it was in her power to add very materially to the comfort of her father and mother, her despondency began to be forgotten in the earnest endeavour to surprise and please them by her exertions, when they returned at night from the mill. The children were always carefully put to bed, though they could seldom be coaxed to sleep till they had had a romp "wi' daddy,"

for "daddy" had now recovered heart to romp again; the kitchen was always tidy, the hearth swept up, and her mother's rocking-chair placed on it for her; the potatoes for supper were simmering on the bar, and clean plates and salt were placed ready on the little deal table; and Nancy herself was often "mending up the bits o' clothes," which she had washed in the day. Her father would stop to give her, in Lancashire phrase "a buss and a blessin'," even before he passed on to "th' babby," which now often bounced out of the cradle where it was put; and Nancy would wipe her brimming eyes in her mother's shawl as she hung it and the bonnet on the peg: and then the reunited family would attack the potatoes and salt with a zest which no alderman ever yet felt for his turtle-soup.

About the same hour in the evening, that Cotton lord of Manchester, to whom we have so often referred, would leave the claret, which he had for some time been sipping alone, and would go up-stairs—but not to the drawing-room. With careful and subdued tread he would step along to that portion of the house where the family sleeping-rooms were

situated, and having listened earnestly at a particular door, he would, with the utmost caution, softly open it, and noiselessly glide in. There, in a most luxurious dressing-room, but which yet looked dismal and melancholy beneath the dim twilight of a thickly shaded lamp, he would see his nephew reading, or affecting to read at the table; near him sat a little, old, foreign-looking matron, apparently muttering her prayers as she passed her beads slowly through her fingers, but ever and anon raising a white handkerchief to her face, as if to wipe a tear. Not heeding these, the cotton-man would advance stealthily, and without sound or breath, to the sofa, whereon lay stretched a young and beautiful being, wrapped in a loose dressing-gown, and apparently fast asleep.

He would bend over her, blessing her in his heart; but even whilst he did so the fair form would become agitated as if by some unquiet dream, the already fevered cheek would flush still more deeply, and the already labouring breath would be still more oppressed. And Frank would steal to the sofa, and kneeling down by it, would whisper:

"We think her somewhat better this evening, uncle."

And Mr. Ainsley, who saw the "canker-worm, death," even in that, the most beautiful rose that ever bloomed on a lovely woman's cheek, would turn away, and in so turning, would meet old Caterina's tearful, hopeless gaze fixed full on him, and he would abruptly, but still with heedful caution, quit the chamber, but directly that he was beyond hearing he would rush to the drawing-room, and, ringing the bell impetuously, would alarm the astonished butler by the tone in which he all unconsciously thundered

"Coffee, sir, instantly!"

The coffee came; and, as he sipped it in a desponding mood, Mr. Ainsley was led, for the *second* time in his life, to reflect on the utter inutility of magnificence and wealth as cordials to the heart when it wants solace.

The *first* time that any disparaging idea of the idol god of his life had risen before his mental eye was at the deathbed of the humble companion of his youth-hood, William Bladow, the hermit. The second time was now, as he left a yet more melancholy

couch, that of his young, beautiful, cherished, but, as he too surely felt, *doomed* niece, Bianca Walmsley. In his first bitter burst of feeling, he looked on the magnificent appointments of his drawing-room, and on the splendid silver and rich china of his tea equipage, as it glittered under his eyes, with almost a feeling of loathing.

"I have toiled and struggled for a lifetime," thought he; "I have known neither rest nor respite till I obtained these things; and to what good? What can they obtain for me, for my *heart*?—Nothing."

And was it not his good angel who whispered at that moment—

"Much: they may procure thee much. As an *end* they are nothing, but as a *means*, used unselfishly, riches may bring happiness even to thy heart."

And as the idea suggested itself, the cotton-man started as with some sudden thought, mused a little, drew a letter from his pocket-book, a closely-written letter, in a lady's hand, and read it carefully twice or thrice. Still he mused, and his tea, stone cold, remained untouched.

At length he rang suddenly, ordered lights into his study, and that he should on no account be interrupted by any one. But when he had established himself there, he did not as was his wont, reach down an Italian poem, or a French comedy, or even "Memoirs of Lorenzo de Medici," or of the "Merchant Princes of Genoa," but he was soon engaged, earnestly and deeply engaged, in studying the mysteries of his bank-book and ledger.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A COTTON-MAN RESCUED.

"For a few short years, or days, or hours,
And happier seasons may their dawn unfold."
ROSCOE.

MR. LANGSHAWE'S pecuniary anxieties were now at their climax; the unexpected depression in trade, which by interrupting his fair and reasonable calculations, had induced these anxieties, still continued unabated, and the heavy, the overwhelming obligations, which by incalculable pains he had contrived to ward off so long, were now falling irremediably on him, and could not fail to crush him. All his exertions had proved ineffectual, and he felt that it was vain to struggle longer against the coming catastrophe.

But the spirit with which he now nerved himself to meet it was of a loftier nature than that which had inspired him at an earlier period. The day of his daughter's projected

marriage had imbued him, as it seemed, with a twelvemonth's penetration and experience. He then saw, and, strange to say, he saw for the first time undisguisedly, the nature of Edith's feelings towards her betrothed husband; and if he had not discovered them on that day, he could hardly have avoided observing since, that, despite the utter annihilation of any wish she might have cherished with regard to young Walmsley, despite the change in her worldly prospects and the deprivation of her many accustomed luxuries, Edith had been more cheerful, more evidently light-hearted, since the rupture of her marriage with Mr. Balshawe than she had been for many months before. Mr. Langshawe did not shut his heart to this lesson; he felt truly and earnestly, that house and land were as nothing to him compared with the happiness of his only daughter; and he was thankful, very, very thankful that he had been prevented from risking the latter, however unwittingly, for the sake of the former. With a chastened and unmurmuring spirit, therefore, he prepared to bow beneath the approaching storm.

Still it was hard to the affectionate husband

and fond father, it was hard to break the matter to those whose patient and cheerful endurance of reverses had more than ever endeared them to him; and who, womanlike, persisted in indulging in themselves, and whispering to his aching ear that hope which he, too sadly and surely instructed, knew well had now no existence save in their own imaginations. Many a time was he on the point of making the final disclosure, and as often did it die on his lips. Still he lingered, still he delayed, and so hours and days passed on.

One morning, however, resolute to defer no longer what it was not only a duty, but had now become a peremptory necessity to say, he resolved to tell them the undisguised truth, so soon as they should have eaten the breakfast towards which he felt no appetite. After lingering in his chamber till, for him, a late hour, he was slowly descending the stairs to the parlour, when he was met by a servant to say that a man had just arrived from town on horseback, from Mr Ainsley, with a letter, which he peremptorily refused to deliver to any hand but that of Mr. Langshawe himself.

Mr. Langshawe immediately possessed him-

self of the letter, and again retreated with it to his chamber.

It was an hour after this before Mrs. Langshawe, too much alarmed to wait longer for her husband's expected summons, entered the chamber, and found him seated with the open letter before him, then, even then, deathly pale and trembling.

"William, my dear William, what is it?"

He did not speak, but pushed the letter towards her. She read as follows:

"Dear Sir,

"The notoriety of your late proceedings, which seem fully to justify the surmises afloat of your present precarious position, will, I think, exonerate me from any charge of indelicacy in my present proceeding.

"We began life at the same time, and much in the same circumstances, and we have, by our individual exertions elevated ourselves in the world, and realised ample fortunes. It is impossible to look back through this series of years without a feeling of interest in the welfare of those who have travelled the same path with ourselves; and I cannot, I do not wish, to look

with indifference on the rumoured downfal of one who has ever been reputed among his class as an honourable, an upright, and a liberal dealer. Your mode of proceeding for some months past makes it evident to those conversant with business that time would set you right, if you had the means to wear through the time.

"To cut the matter short. I have recently withdrawn twenty thousand pounds from trade. This money is at present unappropriated, and is easily available. If it will suffice to redeem you, it shall be made over to you at once, on moderate interest, and with such security as a friend on each side may deem fair.

"Your manly sense, I am sure, will suggest to you not to allow a proposal, unusual, perhaps, among men of trade, to escape you on account of any foolish sensibility.

"Believe me, my dear sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"THOMAS AINSLEY."

"And this money will suffice, William, now; will it not?"

"Yes; it will."

"And you surely will not refuse it."

"Refuse it, dear wife, no: but I cannot write at present: my hand shakes."

Just then it struck Mrs. Langshawe that her husband had not yet broken his fast: she darted down stairs.

"Oh, Edith, love, such news! such news! but I can't stay now: get me a biscuit for your father, whilst I pour him out a glass of wine."

Edith saw by her mother's countenance that the news was not *bad*, so she very contentedly did as she was asked, before she sought the gratification of her curiosity.

Mr. Langshawe seemed not at all aware that he wanted food, and took the refreshment which his wife forced upon him in the ungracious spirit in which stubborn man professes to take many things from an anxious ministrant of his domestic hearth, *i. e.* "for a quiet life."

However, he had the grace to confess to his wife that he was better for her recipe; seeing that he was shortly able to dismiss the messenger with the answer, for which he had waited.

It ran thus:

"My Dear Sir,

"I hardly know how to thank you sufficiently for the noble offer of assistance which you make me. Time, indeed, is all I want, and the sum of money you offer me will set me quite right. With regard to *security*, my books shall be laid before your friend, or friends, at any moment, and they will see, that though so pressed at this moment as to be on the verge of ruin, I have wherewithal to pay abundantly every claim against me.

"I am, my dear sir,

"Your servant, deeply obliged,

"William Langshawe."

The reader will have no difficulty in connecting this action of Mr. Ainsley with the train of thought, and the subsequent search into his accompt-books, in which we represented him engaged in our last chapter. The letter also to which we referred seemed to have some influence over him. That letter we shall now explain.

It was from Mrs. Francis Halling, who was

still with her friends in the South of England, though now expected home immediately. She had heard with deep and tearful interest her nephew's *vivâ voce* account of the interruption of Miss Langshawe's marriage with Mr. Balshawe; and this gentleman's remark to Mr. Langshawe, even at the altar, about the money expected, gave even uninformed people some knowledge of the embarrassed circumstances of the latter. But, as we have seen, Mrs. Halling could understand these matters more fully than any other of their friends. Then, of course, all the circumstances of Mr. Langshawe's change in style of life, and of Edith's active interference in promoting this change, were detailed by her admiring nephew to the still more admiring aunt. It was from the same gossiping correspondent she learnt that all these endeavours were ineffectual, and that the wealthy cotton-man's downfal was at hand. So said the gossips on the Exchange.

Mrs. Frances pondered deeply and sadly on this intelligence. She loved Edith fondly and affectionately, and she very much respected Mrs. Langshawe: she had discovered the sterling excellence, the unselfish worth in this

lady's character, which her outward vulgarity and ostentation hid from more hasty observers. To assist them was out of her power, even if she had not been totally ignorant of the manner in which assistance could be rendered available. Still she could not turn her thoughts from the subject.

At length, on the impulse of the moment, an impulse which she regretted when her letter was irrecoverable, she wrote to Mr. Ainsley, whom she had met in Paris, long before she had any idea of being his neighbour in Lancashire, and with whom she had always kept up a friendly intercourse. She named her own utter ignorance of business affairs, and consequently her inability even to guess whether those of Mr. Langshawe were retrievable by the aid of a friend. "But I write to you," she continued, "in the character which I know it is your pride to maintain—that of a lofty-minded merchant, inaccessible to, or at least uninfluenced by the petty jealousies which are often said to be inseparable from trade, and which are attributed, whether truly or not, in a tenfold degree, to those engaged in Manchester trade.

I am, as I said above, utterly ignorant as to the means by which assistance is to be afforded, even if it can be rendered at all; but if practicable, I appeal to you to save a brother tradesman, inferior to you in many extraneous advantages, but equal to any in moral worth; I appeal to you to save him, if possible, from ruin.

"But I appeal to you still more earnestly, far, far more earnestly, on a nearer, a more interesting ground. I, my friend, am an old woman; you, though much my junior, are long past your youth; yet, it may be, that though we have outlived the passions, we may not have forgotten the feelings of our early years, when gold was indeed as dross compared with the radiant and unselfish hopes in which we indulged. I think, perhaps, I am telling you no secret in naming that Miss Langshawe's feelings for your nephew are not those of a mere acquaintance, and that when she consented to meet another at the altar it was an utter immolation of self for her father. If this matter be in part or entirely unknown to you, I trust it to *your honour;* it was revealed to me in confidence. I reveal it solely to enforce my appeal. Your

nephew is married, and lost to Edith for ever. Will you not, if it be in your power, save this beautiful and excellent young creature from the humiliation of poverty and dependence, in addition to the withering pang, inevitably hers—that of unrequited affection?"

This letter, extraordinary as it was, was well calculated to win on Mr. Ainsley. It appealed skilfully, in the earlier part, to the peculiar pride of his character, and in the latter part it touched all his better feelings, more especially worked on as they were by the vivid recollection called up by Bladow's recent death, of his own sister's early attachment, and forced and unwelcome marriage. Moreover, it came at a time when his feelings were wrought upon to the highest pitch by the illness of Bianca; and when he again perused it immediately on leaving her sick chamber, its appeal was irresistible.

Its result we have detailed above.

CHAPTER XXV.

A STRIKE.

"Rebellion is my theme all day."

COWPER.

MR. AINSLEY, once aroused, did not slumber in the execution of his beneficent office. Interviews immediately took place; the necessary papers and securities were quickly prepared; and without loss of time, Mr. Langshawe was placed in a situation which promised to realize all his golden schemes, and which, more valuable still, procured him at once that repose of mind which of late he had little known, and the want of which had already made havoc in his constitution.

It has not been necessary to the progress of our tale to refer to the state of the country generally during this autumn and winter, yet was it sufficiently gloomy in its aspect to a reflecting mind. The distress in the agricultural districts was extreme, and led to those

incendiary fires and unruly demonstrations, which resulted in the appointment of a special commission to inquire into these offences, and in the extreme penalty of the law being inflicted on many misguided wretches, the tools of higher and more criminal instigators. Taking advantage of these circumstances, political demagogues in the manufacturing districts got up a cry of distress, which did not exist *then*, though it was speedily induced by their machinations; and the "Union," that Union to whose arts poor Jem Forshawe had fallen a victim, was now in active operation, in its praiseworthy endeavours to throw the country into tumult.

Their more decided demonstrations began in a district within a few miles of Manchester. The walls of —— and its surrounding hamlets (towns they would be called if lying more southward) were placarded with appeals and remonstrances, with addresses of the Doghertys and the Oateses, and Resolutions of the Trades' Unions, authenticated duly with the signatures of "secretaries," "chairman," and so forth. The notices of "trade" in the newspapers, breathed the alarm of the "masters;" every-

thing, in short, indicated a speedy "strike," or "turn out."

It came at last; not perhaps, very suddenly, for the day had been previously announced, and notices actually served on the various masters by the secretaries, intimating that if a certain advanced price were not given, the hands were *ordered to turn out.* But on the part of the public generally there was little knowledge of the extended and thoroughly organized preparation which had been made for it.

At the prescribed moment, the "strike" took place, the Union having previously proclaimed that it would from its funds grant to every member who had subscribed for a definite time, an allowance of ten shillings weekly; and at first it made some show of fulfilling its pledge; but all calm observers of course knew that the fund, large as it was, could not bear such a drain, however punctual and generous the remittances from their allies in other towns might be. Even whilst their money lasted, however, the promise of "peaceable agitation" was ill observed. The "strike" dated from Saturday night, and on the ensuing Monday

morning there was a meeting of the "turn outs," and speeches being made, resolutions passed, and so forth, a procession, with musical band, banners, (and some pistols, bludgeons, &c.) was formed, to perambulate the district. In the more populous parts, their appearance would have caused comparatively little alarm, for the houses and shops were closed, and the military were within call. But the mob went not thitherward. Keeping their points of movement secret, or rather, stating many, in order to puzzle calculation and elude pursuit, they moved to the hill sides, and the moors skirting the town; and there the ground being their own, they broke windows, and knocked down the suspected and the offensive, or threw them into the canal with impunity. For hours they thus scoured the country, dragging after them as willing and vociferous partizans, mothers, girls and boys, the old and the young, until to the suspense and anxious watching of the towns-people was added the fear that, influenced by hunger, the mob might return and resort to indiscriminate plunder. This apprehension, however, was not realized. That and many succeeding days passed over with com-

paratively little mischief; the "masters," and all other obnoxious persons, taking care to be at home within the daylight, and the military being ever at command.

Thus matters stood for two or three weeks; the "leaders of the people," the Doghertys, *et id genus omne*, rousing the jaded spirits of their dupes by almost daily out-door orations against the masters and the system of "white slavery," and then hieing themselves home: leaving the seed they had sown to ripen into a bloody harvest, but taking care not to do aught, or to appear so as to give the law a chance of clutching *them*.

Suddenly, however, and, if of necessity, still sooner than was expected, it was rumoured that the weekly payment, after dwindling apace from ten to two shillings, was about to cease altogether, and rumours of ministerial peculation became very prevalent. The rope of sand was beginning to yield; something must be done to bind together its failing ligaments, and to divert attention from questions of accounts. The vows, plighted over dead men's bones, had been demanded with a view to an emergency like this.

The masters had shown no symptoms of yielding. Past intimidation had effected nothing. A signal blow must therefore be given, something which should strike terror into the heart of each individual "tyrant;" and the blow must be so given that none should know whence it arose.

Fearfully was it dealt!

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SURPRISE.

"When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married."

"Come,
And lead me to these sorrows."
SHAKSPEARE.

WITH lightened and happy hearts, Mr. Langshawe and his family prepared for their Christmas visit to Mr. Wolstenholme. Feeling that they were hardly in cue to administer to the mirth which was to be the order of the time, they had intended to forego their engagement, although in order to prevent unavailing entreaties and painful refusals, they had not hitherto hinted their purpose to their old friends. *Now* there was no occasion: they were again most unexpectedly in a condition to contribute their quota to the hilarity of the

hour, and with glad alacrity they prepared to go.

But on the very morning appointed for their departure Edith received a letter from Mrs. Halling, to say that she should be at home in a few hours. To depart in the face of this was impossible; Edith could not even think of it: her parents were quite willing to indulge her, and the chaise was remanded for a day or two, that she might have time to embrace her friend.

Mr. Langshawe's new abode was so much nearer to Mrs. Halling's cottage than Lime Grove had been, that Edith had been continually in the habit of tripping to the cottage since their change of residence, for books, flowers, &c., and the idea of the constant, the daily and hourly intercourse with her valued friend, which this near neighbourhood would induce, had been to Edith one gratifying circumstance in their constrained change of abode. She thought, therefore, nothing now of running across the fields after dark on a dreary winter's night to welcome her friend home again.

Mrs. Halling was delighted to see her, and

felicitated her warmly on her father's happy prospects, and also on her own improved aspect.

"You look, my dear, as much restored to your former self as I could hope to see you: that you should feel regret, disappointment, perhaps some degree of mortification, in your present position, is natural; but your independent womanly spirit, Edith, will teach you not to *indulge* these feelings; and, if I mistake not, the lot of 'hopeless misery' (I use your own words) which you have so narrowly escaped, will render you even thankful for the more alleviated suffering which has fallen to your share."

"You are quite right, Mrs. Frances; if my feelings rebel—and I confess they do sometimes—" and here her eyes filled with tears, "I have only to think of the fate I have escaped, and I become, for the time, perfectly happy."

"And in time will become enduringly so, I have no doubt. But we will talk of something else, love. My nephew, my ungrateful and undutiful nephew, who does not even welcome his old aunt home: where is he?"

"At Willow Bank, I suppose."

"Precisely so: and Carlo the dog is at Willow Bank! and Stephen, the old steward, butler, gardener, valet, and, in fact, indispensable Jack-of-all-trades in our establishment, is at Willow Bank! and the open carriage and horses are at Willow Bank! my close-chariot is here, to be sure; but how I am to use it I cannot tell, unless my nephew expects me to harness the rough-heeled farm-horse with his saddle-pony."

Edith laughed.

"It is no laughing matter with me, Miss Langshawe, I can assure you. I missed a heap of music-books from the breakfast-room, and when I inquired, Rollins did not know, forsooth! but, *most likely* her master had taken them to Willow Bank, for his violoncello had been there some time. I inquired about letters: she thought there was one for me; but evidently it was not forthcoming, and at length she philosophically concluded — I, my dear, being meanwhile all in a fever for my letter— that it would be all right, for no doubt it had been forwarded with the master's to Willow

Bank! What does it all mean, Miss Langshawe?"

"It means, ma'am, that you should not have left your very youthful and inexperienced nephew unprotected for so long a time."

"And it is really so, Edith?"

"It is indeed. But, dear Mrs. Halling, what is the matter? you surely don't object to Harriet?"

"My dear Edith, dismiss that thought at once and for ever. My nephew's wife, whomever she may be, will be welcomed by me, and valued by me as a daughter: and though your friend is not, perhaps, exactly the lady I would have chosen, yet I have no fault to find. If she make my nephew happy she will be inestimable in my eyes."

"Yet you are distressed."

"Tired and nervous, my dear, nothing more. The idea of my future lonely life and solitary hearth rose before my view. My cheerful nephew's company has spoiled me, that is all. We have lived together during his whole life."

"And I am sure that a separation now is the last thing Mr. Ashworth dreams of, or

Harriet either. Why should you separate?"

"Because it is better, because it is right that it should be so. But come, my dear, tell me of yourself; what are you doing this winter?"

"Dare I tell you? We are all on the wing for—Willow Bank."

As soon as she had given time for the anticipated laugh, Edith added, that their expedition had been deferred for a day or two in order that she might see Mrs. Halling previously.

Mrs. Halling thanked her, and after considering for a moment or two, asked if her company would be considered an intrusion by Mr. and Mrs. Langshawe, if she were to offer to join their party.

"*Your* company an intrusion, and on *us*, Mrs Halling?" asked Edith.*

It was quickly decided that the visit was to be deferred yet one day more, and that Mrs.

* From the tone of Miss Langshawe's question it would seem, that though Mr. Ainsley had afforded the assistance wanted to his brother merchant, he had not appropriated to himself the merit of its first suggestion.

Halling should accompany the Langshawes to Willow Bank.

"I know," she said, "that I am going amongst people who will value the kind intention infinitely more than the etiquette of my actions; and I know that I shall gratify my nephew much; that has great weight with me; and your satirical friend, too, will be happy in quizzing me."

"There is one position, Mrs. Halling, in which Harriet never can, never could quiz."

"What is that, my dear?"

"When her heart is touched by unlooked-for kindness, such as this of your unexpected visit to her."

At this moment Mr. Langshawe was announced.

"I should not have intruded, madam, at this hour, even to pay my respects, and express my obligations to you, but my gossiping girl stayed away so long that her mother was uneasy; the night is wet and dark. I am only come to take my rambler home."

They separated in a few moments, after having agreed that they should all proceed together to Willow bank at eleven o'clock the day but one following.

The Langshawes went, as appointed; but Mrs. Halling's excursion was prevented in the most unexpected manner.

As she sate at her solitary luncheon the day after her return, Mr. Walmsley was announced. She received him kindly, and congratulated him on his marriage; but in spite of herself, there was somewhat less cordiality in her manner than usual: her renewed intercourse with Edith the night before, though only so transient, had awakened her astonishment that any one could so lightly forget her, as it appeared from his marriage, the circumstances of which she did not know, that Mr. Walmsley had done. But her coldness, if the expression amounted to coldness, was soon changed for one of the utmost sympathy.

She inquired, of course, after the health of Mrs. Walmsley, and it was with astonishment and dismay that she observed the shade pass over the young man's countenance, and listened to his tone of deep despondency as he replied,

"Poor Bianca was rather better at present, but they had little hope of her ultimate recovery."

She listened with deep interest to Walmsley's further account; for she had heard from Mr. Ainsley only that his niece appeared in very delicate health, and she attached no idea of absolute illness, far less of immediate danger to the circumstance. Mr. Walmsley then proceeded to the immediate subject of his errand. He had promised the parent of Bianca, on his dying bed, to deliver a letter himself into Mrs. Halling's own hands; he should have followed Mrs. Frances into Hampshire for the purpose, but at first he could not bear to leave his poor wife amongst strangers, and since then her illness had prevented his doing so. He now begged to acquit himself of his commission.

So saying, he took from his pocket-book the letter which Mr. Luttrell had written on his death-bed. Mrs. Halling took it with much surprise, and looked at the faltering handwriting without any symptoms of recognition: but scarcely had she read a line or two ere she became agitated and deathly pale, and motioning to Walmsley to wait her return, she left the room. A considerable time afterwards a servant brought a note to him, on reading

which he desired his horses to be put up and betook himself to a book.

Two or three hours afterwards he and Mrs. Halling proceeded together to Manchester.

That evening Mrs. Langshawe received a note from Mrs. Frances Halling, excusing herself from her engagement on the morrow, on the plea of attendance on the sick couch of young Mrs. Walmsley, of whose serious illness she had only that day heard, and who had the strongest hereditary claims on her care and affection.

Mrs. Halling also troubled Mrs. Langshawe to be the bearer of letters of kind congratulation to Miss Wolstenholme and her nephew.

When Edith read the letter, which was at the same time put into her hand, she marvelled at the perfect command of feeling and self which Mrs. Halling must have attained to be able, at this moment, to attend to all the mere courtesies of acquaintanceship.

"My note to your mother, my dearest Edith, will give a true and sufficient reason for my withdrawal from your party to Willow Bank; to *yourself* I would say a word more, in explanation of the reason why I cannot,

at this moment, join a merry party, even to gratify my good nephew, to whom, however, and to his intended wife, I make you, Edith, the bearer of my most kind love. With my formal written congratulations your mother is charged.

"Between you and me, my dearest Edith, there have been no disguises, and we will not assume them now. I will write explicitly to you, and this, as I sincerely believe, may save us both inconvenience hereafter.

"I have learnt within these few hours that the fair young Italian bride whom Mr. Walmsley has brought, is the granddaughter and only descendant of my early friend, Helen Lorimer. Her husband, Mr. Brocksbourne, changed his name to Luttrell in consequence of his succession to some entailed property; and from this circumstance, with which I was unacquainted, I have for long years lost all trace of him.

"My friend, Helen Lorimer, died in giving birth to a daughter, and that daughter also died early, leaving only this child, now Bianca Walmsley. She, long fatherless as well as motherless, has been brought up by her grandfather, Mr. Luttrell, or Brocksbourne, and he

on his death-bed, at which awful period she was married, has written to conjure me, by our early affection, to watch over this child. But, oh! Edith, how shall I add, that she is supposed to be dying of consumption. Poor thing! poor thing! scarce yet seventeen.

"There is somewhat more in this letter, Edith, which I *can* not now fully repeat; yet I will say thus much to you, my dear and high-minded friend, that Mr. Walmsley, though the husband, ay, and the most kind and considerate husband of another, is yet fully worthy of your esteem.

"I do not ask you to remember me in the midst of your gaiety, for I know that you will do so; write to me also, love, and address your letters to Mr. Ainsley's house; I shall obtain them more immediately.

"I am, my dearest Edith,

"Your sincere friend,

"FRANCES HALLING."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A FEARFUL OUTRAGE.

"Oh! what are we, if in our strength
We over-boldly trust?"

WITHER.

THE party which the Langshawes joined at Mr. Wolstenholme's this winter was the first of any extent that this kind-hearted and hospitable gentleman has entertained in this, his new house, in which he was now passing his first Christmas; and he was determined to have a good "house-warming." The mansion deserved the compliment. It was a stone erection, fronted by finely-carved pillars, and situated on a gentle eminence. The arrangements were all complete; the conservatory, leading out of the drawing-room, glistened with all the varied blooms which art and culture can naturalize even to this season, and

everything indicated a presiding genius, moved by the hand of wealth. Outside the contrast was great; the immediate domain, indeed, was beautifully arranged, but it had the fault of most "cotton palaces," it wanted extent. And thus it is all around. Houses, which would fitly adorn a park of miles in extent, are perched in a plantation of a few acres, and look unsightly abortions on, instead of ornaments to, the ground. Thus, Mr. Wolstenholme's house and gardens were *breasted* by a street of poor manufacturing hovels, which had risen since the foundations of his house were laid; and though, a few years earlier, only one factory chimney, and that his own, was visible from the site of his intended residence, now *five* peered to the sky full in view of his drawing-room windows, and belched forth their destroying vapour from every quarter on his finely-cultivated garden; while the whole intervening area, which had been rural pastures and meadows, was broken into masses of cottage building, interspersed with brown bare fields, and here and there the glaring red-brick two-storied house of a "superintendent" or "overlooker."

But enough of this. Few people *within* Mr. Wolstenholme's hospitable domain that merry Christmas thought of the prospect outside. A merry party watched on Christmas eve, a merrier still danced on Christmas night; the mistletoe bough was hung aloft, Christmas carols were roared below, Christmas dances were danced, Christmas songs were sung, Christmas jokes enacted, open house was kept for all who came, and glee and merriment prevailed throughout. But by degrees the guests departed, and by the time the new year had been danced in, few were left in the house but the Langshawes, Mr. Ashworth, and some near relatives, with hosts of children.

These important little people had this evening, as it was Christmas time, been indulged, at Mr. Henry Wolstenholme's request, with a snap-dragon, which, it must be confessed, children of a larger growth seemed to enjoy very heartily. Miss Langshawe was chiefly occupied in seeing that the little ones did not hurt themselves, and Miss Wolstenholme was, as usual, the noisiest of the group, and tormenting every body. But Mr. Ashworth was the great hero of the comedy. He, with rather provoking fore-

thought, put on a glove, an infringement of the rules, which the children loudly complained of, but whilst they were clamouring against him, they lost their fruit. Time after time was his hand put forth, and again and again did it enclose in its capacious grasp quantities of the flaming fruit, which he deposited with unaccountable celerity—somewhere. At first the young ones looked rather blank at seeing their coveted raisins thus vanish from their sight, but they quickly rallied, and "revenge was all the cry." Calling on Henry to assist them, they all with one accord fell on Mr. Ashworth, and fairly dragged him to the floor. There lay the discomfited hero, weak as a child with laughing, and emitting the accustomed "haw, haws!" with very tremulous emphasis, while vest, coat, and trowser-pockets were despoiled of their treasures by a dozen pair of eager hands.

True mirth is always contagious. Henry Wolstenholme stood apart, holding his sides, his sister wiped the tears from her face, whilst all the seniors assembled round the fire joined in one irrepressible burst of laughter. At length the youngsters were satisfied. Each

individual plum was torn from its hiding-place, and the burly thief was allowed to rise. Shaking himself, somewhat in the manner of a Newfoundland dog coming out of the water, he looked about him for a moment, and again burst into a fit of laughter, in which he was again joined in full chorus by young and old. After the mirth had in some degree subsided, Mr. Wolstenholme asked his son, "Had he not better just step down to the factory?"

"I 'm going in a moment, sir."

Great was the outcry of the young folks at this unlooked-for interruption of their festivities, and "Henry, don't go," and "Henry, you shan't go," resounded from every corner.

When, however, they found that his going was inevitable, their anxiety took a new direction, and "How soon will you be back, Henry?" was the question. He whispered, that he should be back in less than an hour, and they must persuade his mother to allow them to stay up. A bonny child, of five years old, hearing this, crept up behind Miss Langshawe on the sofa, and putting her little arms round her neck, whispered, "Might they stay up till Henry came?"

"Yes," said Edith, "if mamma likes."

"There! there!" shouted the child, clapping her hands, "we may stay up, Miss Langshawe says so."

"I said, if mamma likes."

"Oh mamma does like," said another; "she always likes what Miss Langshawe says, and she says too that she wishes sister Harriet would be like her."

"And if she does say so, sirrah," said Miss Wolstenholme, "there is no need for you to repeat it." And she took him by the collar, shook him well, and deposited him on the floor.

However, mamma's consent was carried by acclamation without her own vote having even been asked, and now since going was inevitable, the children were as anxious to despatch their friend as they had formerly been to keep him. One brought him his hat, another his great-coat, and the little one before mentioned showed a magnificent spirit by dragging forward a huge stick, and telling him "to thrash anybody that kept him long."

It might perhaps be about ten minutes after his departure, that a sudden knock was heard at the hall door. We all know how *readable*

raps at the door are; how we arrange ourselves to welcome an aristocratic visitor, or assume an easy air of indifference for the reception of a "snob," according to the intelligence given by the knocker; how all our nerves are strung to expectation by the postman's two-fold rap, and how intensely anxious we are for a letter, although two minutes previously not one of our "charming correspondents" was in our thoughts. But if an unexpected rap comes, unmarked by any of the characteristics we have mentioned, how everybody listens and wonders what it can be. So it was now. The knock was a sharp, sullen, heavy knock, such as made everybody start and listen; conversation ceased in a moment, for it was an unaccountable knock, at a strange time. The door was opened, and a voice was heard inquiring for "the young master."

"He is gone out," said the servant.

Mr. Wolstenholme darted into the hall.

"Whom do you want, my good man?"

The man stepped into the hall, and moving his hat respectfully, asked, in a hurried manner, "for the young master."

"My son Henry is gone to the factory, not

ten minutes ago; if you want him you had better wait a little while."

The man looked distressed, first at the ladies, who had crowded into the hall, and then turning to Mr. Wolstenholme, said, in a low voice:

"If the young master *did* go out, sir, I 'm afeard he is down in the loan, much hurt."

At this moment, and before Mr. Wolstenholme could make any reply, a bustle was heard outside the door, which was instantaneously opened. A crowd of people appeared, and as they partly divided to enter the hall, Mrs. Wolstenholme, who had nervously pushed foremost, saw her eldest son, Henry, borne in by the men—a corpse.*

Pass we this.

* Let not my readers image that this awful incident has been invented for the nonce. A few years ago a young cotton manufacturer of the highest respectability, and most excellent character, was murdered even so, and as suddenly, as we have described, by order of the Spinners' Union. His factory was at the time in full work, and he on excellent terms with his work-people.

The wretches, who had been hired by the Secret Committee to execute this atrocious act, (which was perpetrated within a few miles of Manchester,) undertook "the job" for a reward, to be divided amongst three of them,

The ruffians, delegates of the secret committee of that Union to which we have alluded, had done their work well. This excellent young man—a good son, a good brother, a kind master, for he, and indeed his father also were beloved by every individual in their employ, and their factory was full of hands, in full work,—had been shot by some coward, who stood close behind him; the weapon was loaded with slugs, one of which pierced his

of Ten Pounds. The sole motive of the Union was to strike terror into the minds of the "masters," and not to punish any individual offences (for here were none) of the hapless sufferer.

From the scene of blood one of the party hastened to the Secret Committee, who were waiting in anxious expectation to learn the result of the enterprise: the other two, less hardy, skulked into the woods. They met again to receive from the emissary of the Union the price of blood, but—oh! the power of conscience!—of the three one only would accept the wages of his sin. That one signed a book as a receipt for the money. All afterwards drew their knives, and crossing them, pledged themselves to eternal secresy, and imprecated curses on the one who should prove a betrayer.

For more than three years not the slightest clue was gained in any way to the unravelment of this dark transaction; after that lapse of time one of the culprits *did* "prove a betrayer."

heart, the other his backbone, and the victim fell dead in a moment. The report of fire-arms brought people to the spot instantly, but no one was to be seen but the murdered young man; not a clue, not the remotest trace of the villains remained.

The country, however, was scoured on all sides. With steps as unwearying well nigh as those of a bloodhound, did all classes of people (save one) pursue the faintest shadow of possibility or hope that might lead them to the murderers. But it availed not. Rumour upon rumour arose and died away until the sad event was numbered among the records of past crimes, and heeded no more.

Even this last blow had not the desired effect. The advance of wages, so boldly and wickedly sought, was not obtained; the "strike" ended very nearly as and where it had commenced, save that it left its traces in the naked cottages of the work-people, the pallid and half-famished faces of mothers and children, the overladen shops of the pawn-brokers, and the almost broken heart of one unoffending lady.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE END OF ALL THINGS.

> "Thus, thus, and thus we compasse round
> Thy harmlesse and unhaunted ground;
> And as we sing thy dirge, we will
> The daffodill,
> And other flowers, lay upon
> The altar of our love, thy stone."
>
> HERRICK.

AFTER this eventful Christmas, several months passed over the heads of our different parties without any exciting change; or rather, perhaps, we should say, without any very sudden ostensible change; for these months were quietly and unremittingly weaving their own indelible character in the mingled web of each life, the varied fortune of each house.

The cotton-lord, Mr. Langshawe, was quietly,

yet surely and swiftly, regaining the ground he had lost; his pleasurable anticipations, founded, as they had been, on acute calculation and extensive practical knowledge, were fully realized; he disposed of his heavy accumulation of goods at an immense profit, and, could money alone have repaid him for the anxiety he had undergone, he had been amply remunerated. Lime Grove had fallen into other hands, but he was now in treaty for a mansion even more handsomely appointed than that, which was likely, ere long, to be sold.

Smiles were again beginning to illume the horror-stricken hearth at Willow Bank. The father, the good and affectionate father, could joy in his younger children, even while he bitterly lamented his eldest. The young folks themselves, though they were often sad and often sorrowful, were yet generally content, and often merry; it was natural, it was right they should be so; and the mother joyed to see it, and excited their buoyant spirits and promoted their returning cheerfulness, even whilst her own attenuated form and pale cheek and quivering lip showed too plainly that her

shrinking heart had never yet been blessed by one moment's forgetfulness.

"Time, my dear—time; she must have time," would the sympathizing father remark to his now subdued and observant daughter Harriet.

And Time did his blessed and healing office, and restored smiles to the mourner's lip, and colour to her cheek; yet there was an indescribable something sometimes in the glance of Mrs. Wolstenholme's eye, a nervous start at any sudden noise, and a tremulous agitation over her frame at an unexpected rap at the door; there were these and other little indications, which never afterwards left her, and which showed to those around her that, however well she might conceal her feelings, the mother had never ceased to think of her first-born murdered child.

And in another quiet domestic home a youthful and beautiful girl was progressing to the tomb gradually, but so surely that the most sanguine around her ventured not to whisper a hope. Yet did Death seem even to woo his victim to his arms, so peaceful, so gentle was his approach. No terrors were in

his hand; his glass was there, but the sand, though sinking rapidly, was also gliding smoothly away; his scythe was sheathed, and his spectral form was concealed beneath a mantle of hues, alternately pale and glowing, a most radiant "mantle of decay."

Bianca was spared the suffering which is the most frequent, though not the universal attendant of consumption. Her "rapid decline" was decline merely; she gradually sank and wasted away without harassing cough or agonising pain. In this she, and even more than herself, her anxious friends, were most happy. Yet this freedom from suffering, which prevented every distortion of her features, rendered her even still more beautiful as she approached the tomb.

It had, from the first of her illness, been Bianca's wish to be removed from the town; her medical attendants desired she might be indulged; and as no place could be more quiet, more warm, more suited for an invalid than Mrs. Halling's sheltered nest, thither did that lady insist on her being brought, so soon as the doctor should sanction the removal.

This was accomplished during some warm

days in February; and so much were the invalid's spirits and feelings renovated by the change that, at first, a hope was indulged of some permanent advantage to her health. This hope was soon dispelled, and was never awakened again. Many weeks passed on; but each week produced a perceptible diminution of strength in the sufferer; and now the time was come when this change was noted not from week to week, but even from day to day.

These same weeks and days witnessed also the renewed hopes and energies of an honest and industrious family, who were re-awakening to content and to happiness. By Mr. Langshawe's liberality, as soon as his own reviving circumstances enabled him to be liberal, the Halliwells removed from the close and unwholesome alley, which was already telling a sad tale on the faces of the wife and children, to the outskirts of the town. There, in a poor and scattered, but fast increasing neighbourhood, was a "general shop" to be disposed of,— one of those Noah's-ark sort of concerns, which is as multifariously furnished with dead as that ancient receptacle was with

live stock,—a place where you may get a mop or a red herring, an orange or a bottle of blacking, a loaf or a bit of slate-pencil, a lollipop or a pound of candles, and paper, and tobacco and snuff, and bacon, and butter, and cheese, and sealing-wax and wafers, and tea and sugar, and calico, and flour, and pens and ink, and raisins and coffee, and hearth-stones, and shoe-brushes, and sweet-cakes, and eggs, and flannel, and tapes, and pins and needles, and oil, and vinegar, and firewood, and gingerbread, and ginger-beer, and starch, and garden-seeds, and coke and coal, and treacle, and crockery-ware, and, in short, every imaginable article except the one you at the moment want.

Mr. Langshawe himself examined this shop and the neighbourhood, and concluded, that with care and industry it *would do*. He knew also that his cousin, who had now for years been longing to relinquish his loom, was a likely man to make it do; and here, early in this spring, Joe Halliwell came. His liberal benefactor made him a present of the goodwill of the shop and a year's rent: he also advanced money to stock the shop well, and furnish the

house; and this was to be partly repaid, after a time, by easy instalments. Nancy and her father were to undertake the care of the business, whilst the mother attended to the house and family: and there was a tolerable-sized garden behind, where all were delighted to work, and from which they calculated to raise flowers and vegetables for the shop.

But Mrs. Halliwell found, or fancied, that, not having her loom to take to, she had many idle moments; and, as the house was rather larger than they required, she proposed to have a lodger in the tidy room over the shop. One came, the foreman to a respectable clog and shoe shop in the neighbourhood. At first he did not like it at all: the noise of the children and the bustle of the thriving shop annoyed him sadly, and twice he gave notice to quit: but somehow he is still there, and does not talk of going. He nurses Nancy's baby a good deal; he says it is such a remarkably good child; and he generally assists Nancy to put the shop to rights at night, and often steals a few minutes in a morning to deck the window. He talks of beginning business for himself some day soon, and says he shall want an apprentice at once, and he seems to think

that Joe Halliwell's second lad, Bill, would suit him exactly.

But we are anticipating sadly: for this was not till some time after the opening of the shop, in spring, which we were speaking of.

This same spring had been an advantageous one for others besides Mr. Langshawe, and to few more so perhaps than to Mr. John Balshawe. His father's continued imbecility rendered him the responsible and active manager of the whole concern, and so shrewdly and well did he play his cards during this sudden rise and activity in trade, that he is supposed to have realized immense profits. It is considered indeed, and with some reason, that in no long period he will be one of the most influential potentates of the Cottonocracy; hereafter, perhaps, one of its representatives in our reformed House of Commons.

And this spring saw Jem Forshawe removed from the cell he had hitherto occupied in the lunatic asylum, to another in the ward for "incurables."

June was now far advanced: the spring had been cold and unpropitious; vegetation had been backward, the flowers had scarce ventured to open their petals, but now, as if to

atone for past chills, summer burst at once and radiantly over the earth. The windows of Mrs. Halling's little south parlour were wide, wide open, for there was not a breath on the balmy air to be feared even for the dying sufferer, whose couch was spread in front of them. Indeed, the sultry sunbeams were oppressive to those around, but to her they seemed to waft some of the balminess of her native land, as from time to time she feebly turned her face towards them. The flowers of the magnificent horse-chestnut, which she had watched from day to day, were faded and dead, and their blackened stems rose stiff and unsightly above the leaves; but nearer than that was a late laburnum, which though withering now, as the sun-rays fell on it gleamed like a shower of gold. The garden was a wilderness of roses, now in full bloom, and a thousand common garden flowers mingled their luscious scents with them and with the flaunting, sweet-scented honeysuckle, which, though intended to be trained round the window, had pushed a rich cluster within.

But it was evident that this garden, sweet and luscious as were its scents, varied and beautiful as were its blooms, had not supplied

the gorgeous flowers with which the little parlour was profusely decorated; these were all exotics, and chiefly, indeed, almost entirely, such as you meet in Italy's land. Never a day passed that, from some or other of the splendid conservatories around, rich flowers came not as an offering of kindness to the "stranger in a foreign land;" and to her they were the kindest offerings that could be made.

At this moment the latch of the door is noiselessly moved, and Mr. Langshawe glides in. Nobody notices him, for it is often his wont to do this when he fetches his daughter home from her daily attendance on Bianca,—an attendance so unremitting, so devoted, that if care and kindness could have saved her, Edith's alone would have done it. But Mr. Langshawe, who generally keeps behind the invalid out of sight, that she may not be disturbed, now comes gently forward, bearing in his hand a cluster of orange-flowers, so radiant and beautiful that a pleased smile played on Bianca's dying cheek, and even a tinge of colour flitted there for a moment. Mr. Langshawe laid them on the pillow and instantly withdrew, sick at heart. He had been to visit the conservatory of the mansion for

which he was in treaty, and the instant his eye caught these blossoms he had wrenched them away so ruthlessly that the indignant gardener thought he must be mad. He had hastened to Bianca with them, hoping they would afford her a few hours' pleasure; he saw that they were just in time to deck her corpse.

Yet her friends thought her somewhat better to-day: she had been carried into the parlour at an earlier hour than usual, and her husband said, that when he carried her she had exerted herself a little in a way not customary: he was sure she was somewhat better. Bianca knew otherwise.

But though from the extremity of weakness she neither spoke nor was spoken to, she appeared as usual perfectly calm and happy, as she lay propped on soft pillows, watching the sun's decline.

At length she became agitated and uneasy, and those around her re-arranged her pillows, and performed all those useless offices which anxious affection dictates at such a moment. Edith knelt, as she had often done before, by the pillows, and passing her arm gently under one, raised the sufferer's head, and supported

it, and she became again tranquil and composed. After a little while a slight convulsion passed over her features: it was gone in an instant, but life was gone with it!

And they buried her, not in the large family vault which Mr. Ainsley had recently purchased, beneath a new magnificent town church: —no; Frank would not hear of that. They dug her grave in the retired sunny corner on the south side of the church-yard, not very far from Mrs. Halling's cottage. A humble country church, and a rural churchyard, where the birds build their nests in the old trees, and in the clustering ivy, which half hides the church; where the simple country-folk spell over the grave-stones on a warm Sunday afternoon, and where, haply, the village lovers kept tryst on a moonlight night; but where there is no desecration of the graves by thoughtless multitudes, hurrying over them for "a short cut," through the week, who never dream of them on the Christians' holy day; where, all around, the corn waves wildly in the spring gale, and the lofty trees stretch their free arms to heaven; where the cattle repose in the pleasant pastures, and bees and birds revel in the pure air, and all sights and sounds are those

of nature and repose. In such a churchyard as this was Bianca buried.

The orange flower, which she loved, was strewed in profusion in her coffin, ere yet her fair form had given any token of decay; but amid these clusters were placed some white roses, emblems of purity; some sprigs of rosemary, "for remembrance;"—"and these," added Edith, "for hope;" as with fast-dropping tears she placed among the rest a few evergreen leaves of myrtle and bay.

Her grave was under a large, a magnificent lime tree, now full of flower, and flinging its luscious perfume far and wide on the air; and long, long ere her marble memorial—a weeping nymph, worthy of her own land — was placed within the walls of the church, this tree had buried its myriad blossoms in the consecrated earth of her peaceful and quiet grave.

THE END.

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